

# In Search of the Drum



*a novel by* **Ailo Gaup**

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**AILO GAUP**

Translated from the Norwegian  
by Bente Kjos Sjordal



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Translated from Ailo Gaup's *Trommereisen*  
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English translation from the Norwegian by Bente Kjos Sjordal  
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## Translator's Note

In translating this book, I have tried to be as literal as possible, preserving the author's mode of expression to give the reader a more authentic feel for the language, the culture and the people depicted in this story—an indigenous people reclaiming the right to their old ways.

Bente Kjos Sjoldal



When he went to bed the fourth evening, it took him a long time to fall asleep. He did not have a new dream. As the nights went by, his expectations dwindled till he only thought about the three dreams once in awhile.

Autumn turned into winter and winter to spring and then summer again.

Suddenly one night the drum came sailing out from the kingdom of the Sun. It soared toward him surrounded by raging flames. He immediately understood that something had changed. Something was wrong. The magical drum scared him. He began to run but had no chance to outrun it. Chased by the fierce ball of fire, he was forced out to the very edge of a cliff.

The next night the nightmare returned. Night after night the burning drum flew through the air toward him, frightening him into flight toward the edge of the cliff. He became nervous and irritable in his daily life, felt he was being chased by an enemy he could not control.

It was Lajla who decided they needed to travel north. This decision made the threatening dreams about the Sun Drum disappear.

Now the drum was no longer chasing him. He was chasing it.

The last time he drove this way, the road climbed in switchbacks up from the coast. Now it was improved and almost without curves. Sooner than expected, he was up in the mountains and he pulled into a parking area. He switched the motor off and sat in the stillness. Lajla was breathing heavily. She was sleeping. Then he woke her. She rubbed the sleep from her eyes, lifted her long, black hair, and stretched.

"Where are we?" she asked.

"Do you realize that you have slept for the last hundred and forty miles?" he uttered.

They got out of the van, into the wind and the darkness. Little by little, as their night vision awakened, the mountains and the tundra emerged out of the darkness under a waning moon, a landscape and a fantasy slowly materializing.

"I recognize this place." Lajla was still a little bit sleepy.

"Nothing seemed familiar to me until we were all the way up here. They have straightened the road," Jon replied.

The tundra lay wide and open around them. The naked, womanly shapes suddenly touched him, reached into his glands, drives and dreams. A feminine landscape body talked to him from silhouette behind silhouette. The rounded hills and the pointed mountains felt like hips and breasts. He had come home.

They had driven through a community by the coast. Now it lay hidden beneath the mountains and their dark-casting shadows. But they had a view toward the ocean, where moonbeams glittered on the waves.

"Can you identify the subtle line between the ocean and the horizon?" asked Jon.

She was standing next to him and the warmth from her body reached him. He heard the stillness as something in itself now, not just as the absence of engine-noise.

"Can you?" he repeated.

She nodded and put her glowing face into the small of his neck and her lips kissed his skin in the most sensitive place. He embraced her and his right hand slid under her jacket and shirt, feeling her stomach, then her breasts. Once again, this touch created a feeling of affinity, encompassing all the tenderness that had always been present in their relationship. Then he suddenly bit her shoulder. She jumped, laughed and embraced him, held him tight. The embrace was different now, more arousing. Lajla's intensity, the female landscape around him, and his feeling of having come home gave him his own quivering sensation.

A brisk wind had been blowing when they got out of the van and started the fire. Now the coffee cups were empty, the coals had died and the air felt lifeless.

"It's so still." He jumped at the sound of his own voice.

"I like it," she said.

"It's beginning to feel dead and eerie."



"It's getting chilly," she said.

Lajla walked back down to the van. Jon stayed. He could hear how she slammed the door behind her.

At the same time, as if an echo from the slam, came another sound, a high-pitched whistle. He turned toward the sound and saw something soaring across the mountains toward him. With frightening speed, this dot grew into a dark form with an enormous head. Out of the large mouth protruded a piece of pipe. The opening was large enough to suck him in. He stood paralyzed as the pipe took aim.

Then a frog croaked by his feet. Jon jumped. The vision disappeared. The danger was over. The frog hopped away like a silver flea in the moonlit mountains.

He walked down to the van without looking back. There was an old saying: "Don't look back; whatever you hear or feel is best left behind."

Jon needed to calm down, to regain his equilibrium. He sat down, resting his back against a slab of stone, and looked out over the tundra. The road crawled like a pale asphalt snake through the hills. Down below, the moonlight was reflected in the van's glass and chrome. The moonbeams sparkled in frosty heather and mica on the naked stone. His eyes moved from one sparkle of light to the next. A myriad of small twinkling dots came alive and began to dance around him. Dancing in circular motion, together as if in pairs. Pairs of eyes. And between the eyes were black, shiny snouts.

It was in these mountains that the Germans suffered their first defeat.

"What you saw must have been a ghost from the war," said Lajla.

"It was no dead soldier. It was something entirely different."

"What was it then?" she asked.

"A killer flew over the mountains."

"How about the bears? Weren't you afraid of them?"

"They only emerged from underground to show their snouts."

She held his face in her hands. She kissed him lightly on the eyes and on the forehead. At first, to kiss away what he had seen. Then she realized she was also doing this to calm herself. It had been cold out there. She had had a premonition that something was going to happen, something dangerous, and now it had begun.



*Men's leggings of reindeer shank skin, a woolen cover in background.*

THE LANDSCAPE APPEARED in the cones of light created by the headlights, then disappeared behind them, swallowed by darkness.

"You are driving fast," said Lajla.

She noticed how her comment irritated him. He was staring straight ahead, a bit tense, to demonstrate that he was ignoring her. And he did not slow down.

She knew him so well. Not just his profile, the nose and the cheekbones and the neck below the black hair, with a trace of gray. She knew how he reacted, knew how his eyes changed color, grew darker, narrower.

"We must get there tonight," he finally replied.

He was annoyed with her. She had been sleeping for the last hundred and forty miles, had not kept him company. Now she was criticizing him.

"I remember another time you said the same thing," she added.

She did remember. He had another vehicle then. They were going home for Christmas and he wanted to set a personal winter driving record from Oslo. Then they crashed through a snowbank and sailed through the air over the edge of the highway somewhere in northern Finland.

This was a different journey. The search had begun. It felt as if he were entering a religious war. There had been a religious war. Drums had been burned in the name of the church and the king. Shamans were also burned. As time went on, the tribe's spiritual power, the way of the shaman, was destroyed. The great tribal picture had been reduced to ashes.

Nevertheless, there was always a nevertheless. He had heard a drum one time. It was many years ago. One winter night he had come to a house in the far north. People were sitting quietly in the



kitchen; not a word had been spoken. From a room behind the kitchen he could hear the monotonous sound of drumming.

He had sat down in a chair and listened, in silence. Then something happened, an enormous bang. First he thought the rafters had broken. But the ceiling and the beams were intact. However, an opening appeared in the roof. He flew through the opening, up to the stars and then beyond them into a dark tunnel which was different from anything he had ever seen.

The noaide was a small, stout man with black hair. He walked through the kitchen, right past him, with the drum under his arm. Jon caught a glimpse of the handle and the bowl. A symbol was carved into it. It began to glow in the half-light of the kitchen. Then the glowing Sun sign broke loose from the woodwork and shot into him like an arrow of light.

At the same time, the man paused for a moment, looked at him with examining eyes before he disappeared.

Jon was completely confused by these happenings, the opening in the roof, the Sun sign shooting into him and the look in the man's eyes. He was sure all the other people in the room had noticed this. But he was in for a surprise. They did not seem to have seen anything unusual. It had happened before his own eyes only.

If a drum with this symbol, indeed existed, it must truly be powerful. He wanted that drum.

He listened as the sound of the motor filled the van. The dashboard instruments were lit up in circles behind the steering wheel. He felt restless. That was the reason he was driving so fast. He let up on the gas a bit. It began to rain. He turned the windshield wipers on low. The wiper arm moved across the windshield, licking up the drops.

"Did you see that?" he asked Lajla.

"What?" she replied sleepily.

He had seen something above the road but she was already falling asleep again. He wished he had the company of someone

other than a woman filling the compartment with drowsiness. It was contagious. He had a hard time keeping his eyes open.

"Lajla," he said, but there was no answer.

Jon concentrated on the road. It snaked down from the mountain plateau into a valley. As he drove deeper into the valley, the shadows on the valley floor grew darker. The road flattened out around the arm of a fjord. The rain grew heavier, splashing the windshield and the asphalt. He turned the wipers on high.

In a curve, her head fell forward. Her dark hair hung before her face. With his right hand, he brushed the hair back, lifted her head and she awoke.

"Do you think you can find the house where you saw the drum?" she suddenly asked.

"Yes, I think so," he replied.

"Do you suppose they will tell you who the man was?"

"I hope so."

Just as suddenly as it had begun, the rainshower ended. Jon turned the wipers off.

"There is a possibility they might not want to tell anyone who he was."

"They will trust me."

"They could have changed their minds. Perhaps they think the man is connected with the devil."

"It's possible."

"You know what the priests say about these things."

"Yes."

"Did you find out where he was from?"

"No. The only thing I was told was that his name was Jon."

Lajla fell asleep again. He was tired too.

"You have to stay awake and keep me company!" he shouted. She did not wake up, did not respond. Her eyes were closed and his eyelids grew heavier and heavier. On the windshield, the water collected in tiny drops, closely spaced.

He was fumbling for the knob, got the wipers going just as the headlights revealed a bump in the road ahead of him. The road was blocked by a herd of animals. They were extremely large and horned. His foot found the brake pedal and stamped it to the floor. But he knew it was too late. He could not stop the van in such a short distance.

The animals turned their heads and horns in a way that made them look like a many-headed troll. Each second felt like a piece of chewing gum slowly being pulled out. He waited only for the soft crash of fur, meat and bodies against the blunt vehicle, right there in front of his feet.

The van stopped. Lajla awakened. She stared at him in surprise. Even more astounded, she looked ahead. There, looking straight into their eyes with its muzzle against the windshield, stood a horned moose on long legs. In slow motion, it turned away, jumped beyond the cone of light from the headlights and disappeared.

"That was close," Jon said quietly.

He took a deep breath before he opened the door and hopped out, still in shock, his knees trembling. The moose was gone, but the reindeer herd was still crossing the road, both in front and in back of the vehicle.

Jon examined his van. There were no dents in the hood nor blood or hair stuck to the bumper. He got the flashlight, pointed the light along the sides of the road and through the herd. He saw neither wounded nor dead animals.

"Did you feel the impact?" she asked.

"I didn't feel anything."

"But didn't you see it?"

"I think I must have blinked at that moment," he answered.

"I woke up when the brakes grabbed."

"I'm thankful they worked," he said.

The reindeer herd disappeared into the darkness. But the vision of the ancient, gray animals remained imprinted in his memory.

"Either this vehicle had wings or the animals on the road were lifted through the air and set down again whole and healthy because this could just as well have been a blood bath," Jon added.

"Truly amazing," said Lajla.

"What is it with you, anyway?" asked Jon. "You always perk up late in the evening and are the last one in bed."

"I don't know. I'm just tired."

"You are not very good company. I have driven through half of Norway with a zombie. It's making me crabby."

It was dark. It was sprinkling. The valley seemed narrow. He wanted to move on but she was holding him back.

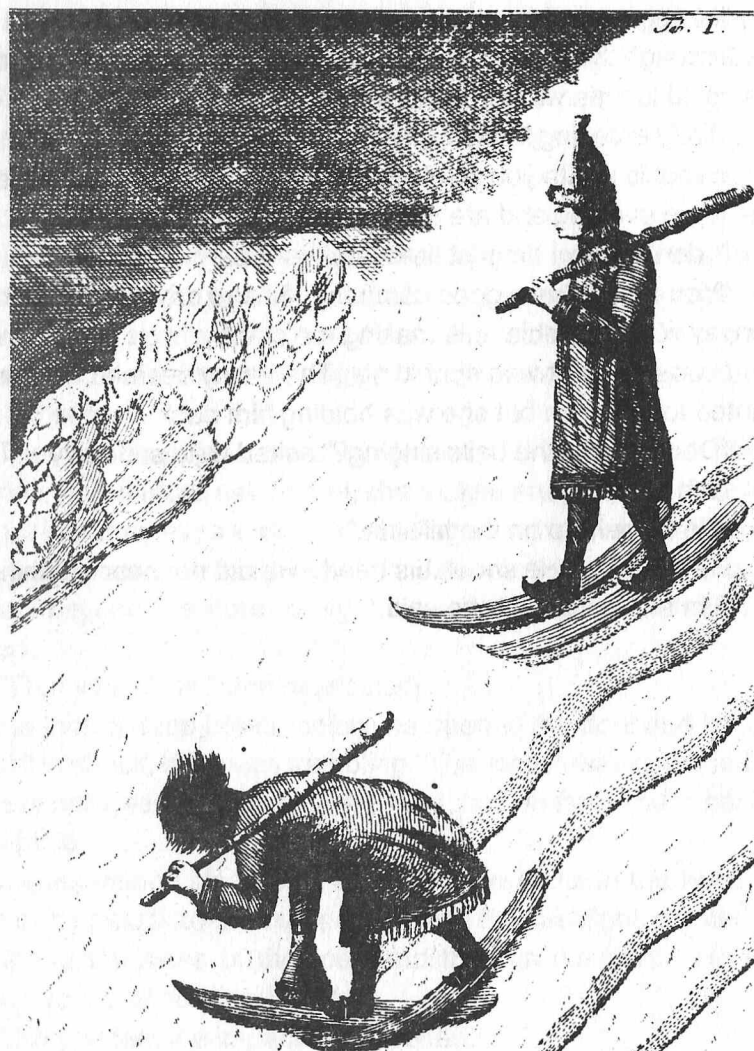
"Do you hear the bells singing?" asked Lajla suddenly.

"Where?"

"Up there. Up on the hillside."

He listened. He shook his head. He did not hear anything.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she said.



*Lapp skiers descending a slope. Left person is stooping over to pick up his cap as he moves. The first skiers at the Northern Cap were the Lapps. The illustration is taken from Kund Leem. A Portrait of Finnmark's Lapps, Copenhagen 1767.*

AS THEY CAME around a curve, the headlights revealed a shiny, wet, bare, dark mountain.

Lajla took the map from the glove compartment and unfolded it.

"We should be there in about half an hour," she said and put the map away.

Again, a reindeer herd crossed the road. But this time the visibility was good and the distance safe. Jon pulled over to the edge of the road, parked and turned the lights off. They went out into the wet darkness. In front of them, the herd passed in a slow stream. Above them towered a mountain, like a heavy, dark shadow.

"It is creepy here," said Lajla.

A car came toward them in the night. Then the lights disappeared, swallowed by the shadows.

"I'll be happy when we are back up on the tundra," continued Lajla.

"This mountain feels oppressive. Do you feel it, too?" he asked.

Then they heard the gunfire, several shots muffled by the rain. He put a finger, in warning, to his lips. Quietly, they got back into the van. A gunshot here in reindeer country in the dark of the night could mean only one thing. Someone was on a meat hunt and not a legal one.

"Start the engine. Surprise them."

Jon started the vehicle, turned the lights on and drove ahead. A parked car was bathed in their headlights. The shadow of a figure ducked down behind the car and disappeared.

"Take this." Lajla gave him the flashlight.

Jon drove up next to the vehicle, shone the light through the window. There was nothing to see. The car looked like any other station wagon parked along the road while the family was enjoying



themselves at their cabin. But somewhere in the mist stood a person with a fast-beating heart, perhaps even with his finger on the trigger.

The first thing Jon noticed was the top of an antler. It could have been a branch but a certain reflection made him look closer. A reindeer was lying there. The abdomen was cut open; the intestines and stomach had slid out onto the ground. The animal was still warm. The poacher had dragged the carcass behind some bushes to gut it out.

When he heard movement in the brush above him, Jon figured it must be the poacher. He pointed the light toward the sound. A bird flew up. Then it was quiet. He heard the trickling of a creek and the heavy whisper of night, autumn and heartbeats.

Again, he heard something in the brush above him. Without thinking, he made a quick dash toward the thicket, where the sound was coming from. It was not a man. It was a wounded bull. It was kicking its feet in the moss. Blood ran silently out of the bullet hole.

He pulled his knife, stabbed the animal. The neck bent backward. The head, horns and the whole body quivered, and the pale tip of the tongue curled out before death came.

"We'll report this," said Lajla.

Jon shone the light on the license plate.

"I'll write it down here so we don't lose it." Lajla scribbled the number on the sun visor.

The fog came seeping down from the mountains. The road became curvy and narrow.

"Did you say half an hour?" asked Jon.

"Have you seen a sign?" she questioned him.

"Lajla, you are the map reader."

She did not answer. The visibility was terrible. The fog closed in around the van. She unfolded the map, pointed to the place where she thought they were.

"We'll be there soon."

"That's great. But should we be seeing the ocean?" he asked.

"No," she said, shining the light down on the map.

"But what's that? It's the ocean, isn't it?"

He stepped on the brakes, rolled down the window, and salty ocean air filled the van. Below the road lay the beach, where waves were splashing between the boulders.

"We must have taken a wrong turn," said Lajla as she looked down at the map.

"This is a back road and it couldn't be much narrower. Where do you think we are? Where do you think we should go?"

Irritated, he snatched the map from her.

"How dare you!" she exclaimed. "Let me look."

"You were sleeping instead of paying attention."

She pulled the map back but he hung on until they figured out that the map was not going to help them anyway. It showed only the most important roads connecting that part of the country. It was not detailed enough to show the small back roads. There they were in the middle of the night, in fog and darkness, not knowing their whereabouts. Upset, he shifted the van into gear, drove on into the unknown.

"Why in hell did I take her with me?" he thought to himself.

"Oh, he is feeling sorry for himself," said Lajla as if she had read his mind.

"You were supposed to be the map reader," he answered.

"Oh, how disappointed he is."

"I want to get there tonight."

"And so proud."

"Stop being sarcastic," was his only remark as he looked at her.

"Watch out, he has his hackles up!"

"Bitch!" He would like to have said something stronger but lacked the fire to get really angry.

"Oh, listen to him, isn't he nice and considerate. You are an insensitive son of a bitch. Not the least bit thoughtful. Always blaming someone else."

"Puh."

"What is the big catastrophe here? All we have to do is stop, lie down and go to sleep. Right here. Tomorrow our problems will be gone."

He did not want to stop, even though she was right and he was overly tired. He felt he had to push on in spite of all good sense. So he kept his foot on the gas and his hands on the wheel.

For two days now, he had been staring straight ahead, staring and staring at the road in front of him, a wide, good road, a road with white reflective strips on the right side and yellow midline, a road with no markings on the right side, old blacktop and oiled gravel. Now he was driving on gravel. The van was shaking so much he felt sorry for it. The kilometers were slowly rolling away on the speedometer. His neck got stiffer and stiffer. His eyes were burning.

"If we run out of gas in the middle of nowhere, it would be in tune with everything else on this trip," muttered Jon to himself.

At the very same moment, the sky cleared. It was like emerging from a tunnel. The landscape around them became visible. The moon was shining between the mountaintops. The light was yellow. Then Jon saw something amazing. A sun was shining out into the night from a mountainside.

Below the sunlit mountains stood a house. A car was parked outside and there was light in the window.

"We can stop here and ask how far we have to go."

Jon nodded and turned up the side road to the house. When he shut off the motor, he realized how tired he was. He was tired to the bone. He rubbed his eyes and his temples. Even though they were standing still and his eyes were closed, the road kept coming at him, constantly getting narrower and more winding.

"I wish we could dive into bed," Jon said.

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A MAN AND a woman could be seen through the window. The man was smoking. It looked like they were waiting for someone. The woman had a red, white and blue wool shawl around her shoulders as if she were cold. The man stubbed out the cigarette, stood up and disappeared.

"Shouldn't we go inside?" asked Lajla.

They had gotten lost in a landscape full of narrow canyons and high mountains. It was her fault. Now she was impatient to find out where they were.

It smelled like mold in the front entry. A bulb hanging from a wire lit up the hallway. A stairway led to the loft.

Lajla knocked at the kitchen door.

"Come in," a voice answered. She opened the door, went in and Jon followed her inside where the woman was still sitting at the kitchen table.

"Good evening. Sorry to bother you this late," said Lajla.

"It is late," answered the woman.

"We need help," continued Lajla.

"You have to go upstairs," said the woman.

"All right." Lajla turned to go.

"Not you, but him." The woman pointed at Jon.

"Me?"

"Yes."

On the kitchen table stood an ashtray. A thin line of smoke rose from the ashes of the home-rolled cigarette the man had left behind.

"You stay here," she said with authority to Lajla.

Jon took the stairs two at a time. Why did he have to go up to the loft when it was Lajla who had asked for help? He knocked on the nearest door in the loft's hallway.

"Yes," answered a voice and he entered the room.

Inside, the man sat behind a table. The room was rectangular, lit by a table lamp. The log walls were just as bare here as they were in the hallway. But the lamp cast a heavy man's shadow against the back wall.

"You are late," said the stranger.

"I am sorry. We have driven a long way."

"Of course."

"We need help," said Jon.

"Of course." The man stood up and went over and opened a chest.

"We'd better get started," he said and then took something out of the chest. It was an oval-shaped object wrapped in a piece of black cloth. The man put the bundle down and closed the chest. Then he picked it up again and carried it in an unusual manner and laid it on the table. With his right hand he began to remove the black cloth. Under it was something wrapped in a piece of deep red velvet.

Jon was just about to say something to clear up the apparent misunderstanding. Then his tongue froze and he was unable to utter a single word. The red piece of velvet slid to the side. There on the table lay a bowl drum, at an angle, with the skin facing him. The drawings were almost invisible—they were so old. But the reddish dye still showed through in places. His body grew hot with excitement.

The man took out an oblong cloth bundle, unwrapped the drumming hammer with his right hand while his left hand lay on the table next to the drum. Something was strange about that hand. But it was mainly the drum that drew Jon's attention.

"What did you say your name was?" the man asked.

"I didn't say," answered Jon, hesitating to give any further information.

"You can't back out now that you have finally come and I am ready to drum."

The man placed the strange hand on the drum's handle and picked up the hammer with his right hand. Jon suddenly realized the man had an artificial hand.

"Yes, it is artificial, but the arm is good."

Jon had always heard that shamans who lost teeth or limbs also lost the power. It was only whole people who could drum. As all this flashed through his mind, he became speechless. In the meantime, the man with the drum grew more and more impatient.

"Don't you have the nerve? Are you afraid to look into the future?"

"We came to ask directions. There must be a misunderstanding. We got lost," said Jon finally.

"What?" The stranger sounded surprised.

"We got lost."

"It wasn't you who phoned?" he asked as if he did not believe what Jon told him.

"No."

"What's your name?"

"Jon," replied Jon.

"You got lost," the man repeated. His voice took on a pensive tone as if Jon had told him something very important. It was just unexpected enough for Jon to take notice. He took a closer look at this man. He was somewhere between fifty and sixty, his face was drawn, and he had a deep wrinkle that ran from the ridge of his nose clear to his hairline.

"We just wanted to know where we were. We have been driving all day. We were wondering if we could perhaps rent a room here for the night or if you could tell us how far it is to the motel in Skibotn."

As he talked, Jon noticed how his words were sounding increasingly strange in this room. The man grabbed the drum. With a sudden motion, he re-covered it with the cloth, turned quickly and laid it in the chest. The lid fell down with a bang and there was a sound of a key being turned.



"The healthy arm is as strong as two." Jon was lifted up and almost thrown against the door.

"You should have seen the wrinkle in his forehead when he realized what was going on. Then he threw me against the door," Jon told her.

"I heard the noise."

"He did it with his healthy hand. The left one is artificial."

"Why did he get so angry?"

"He was expecting someone else. Still, it was weird."

"Did you ask where the drum came from?"

"The mood didn't invite such a question."

They came to an intersection. Immediately beyond, where the pine forest and the ocean met, stood the motel. They parked and got a room. Five minutes later, they were in bed with the lights off. Usually, after a long day behind the wheel, images of the road kept coming at him. Now it was not the road he saw but the drum being unwrapped and then hidden away again. Could it be the same drum he had seen before?

"He wasn't a good person," said Lajla in the dark.

"He wasn't dangerous," replied Jon.

"He was a wolf," declared Lajla.

"He was only a sly, little fox who had gotten its teeth in a steak."

There was silence for a moment.

"You are wrong. There are evil people and he was one of them," affirmed Lajla.

"What did she say?" asked Jon.

"She was friendly after you left and asked where we were from."

"What did you tell her?"

"The truth. Then she asked what we were doing."

"What did you say?"

"That we were on vacation. She must have been a seamstress or something because she brought out a bunch of needles. She looked tired, I thought. But she was friendly and interested."

Lajla's words echoed in the dark room. They became small, black dots in a heart-shaped landscape of light. Through the landscape he saw two people coming toward them.

"Can you see them, the old man and the old woman?" asked Jon.

"No," she responded.

Just as he thought he could see them clearly, they faded away.

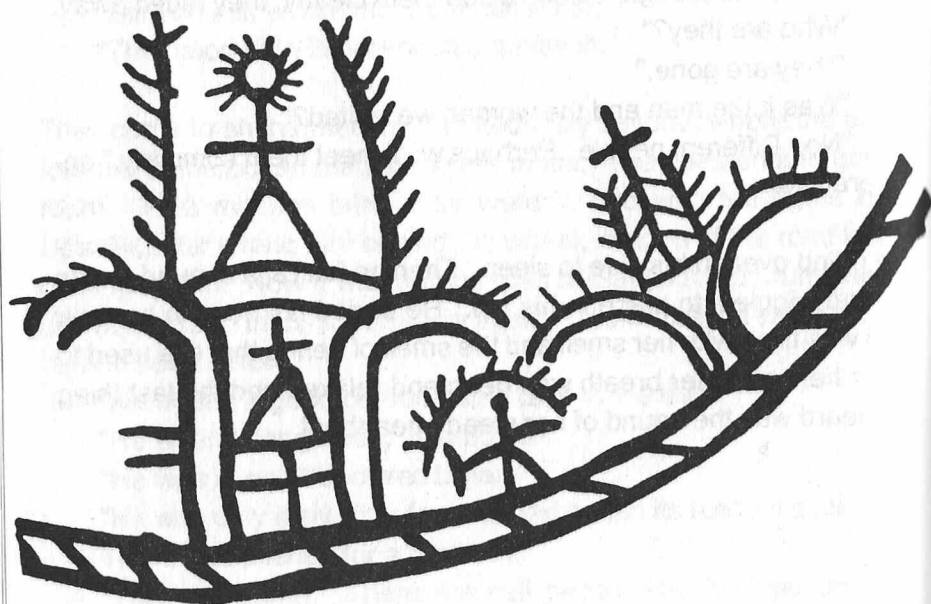
"Who are they?"

"They are gone."

"Was it the man and the woman we visited?"

"No. Different people. Perhaps we'll meet them someday," answered Jon.

He rolled over on his side to sleep. Then he felt Lajla's round, warm behind wiggle into place in his lap. He buried his nose in her hair and was filled with her smell and the smell of henna that she used to color her hair. Her breath was deep and relaxed and the last thing he heard was the sound of her steady heartbeat.



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HE OPENED HIS eyes and was looking straight into a narrow fold of skin covering her cervical vertebrae. It was very early in the morning but light enough for him to see the fine hairs at the nape of her neck. They bent over easily as he blew on them. Again, she wiggled her behind into his lap. He felt light and heavy, awake and sleepy all at the same time. She felt close, yet far away in her half-conscious state and it aroused him.

Afterward they went back to sleep. He woke up again, filled with images from a morning dream.

He was walking in the woods. Then he came to a pond. Two bluebells were growing at the edge of the bank where he was sitting. He could see a frog at the bottom of the pond. Suddenly, the frog became a prince. The entire pond was changing into a large, airy ballroom with crystals hanging from the ceiling and gemstones woven into the wallpaper. The light sparkled in red, turquoise-blue, green and yellow stones.

"This surprised you, didn't it?" said one of the bluebells suddenly.

Then he woke up. Lajla was taking a shower.

"Should we drive back and see if the house is still there?" asked Lajla while they were eating breakfast.

"Do you want to?"

"If we hadn't gotten lost, we wouldn't have stopped at that house."

"That's right."

"I'm sure someone put a spell on me to make me sleepy."

"Do you think he did it?"

"In the old days they could bring on bad weather, sleep and accidents."



"Do you think he has that kind of power?"

"Perhaps not he but the drum," answered Lajla.

They went back to take a look at the place, the house and the people, in daylight. By now it was late morning. The sun was shining. Perhaps they were two perfectly normal, friendly people and not at all like they had experienced them last night in their lost, frightened and tired state. It must have been quite uncomfortable for them to get two strangers stumbling in at that hour.

The morning sun was shining in the pine needles at the treetops. A fishing boat cut a slice in the sun's reflection on the fjord. A flock of seagulls hung above the boat. Today it was exciting to drive through the canyon. It did not feel narrow and dark like last night.

"We can tell them we are looking for something we lost," suggested Lajla. She was feeling good and it was contagious.

"Perhaps the wrinkle in his forehead is gone. Perhaps his hand is normal."

"You could tell them you are looking for a drum and ask to see this one again."

"Sure," he agreed.

"You could ask where he got it."

"Right," he answered, still in good spirits.

"You could even ask if he would teach you how to use it," she added.

"That's possible."

"Afterward, you could ask if you could have the drum."

The house looked small and deserted. Only the tire tracks revealed that someone had been there recently. The front door was locked. A few cigarette butts were lying in the ashtray on the kitchen table. Curtains were pulled in the windows at the back of the house. He noticed how the window caulking had dried out. In several places it had fallen out so the small nails holding the glass in place were visible. He had only to pry them out, remove the glass and unhook the latches. Then the way in would be clear.

"There is no one here to ask," hinted Jon.

"About what?"

"About getting the drum."

"No."

"But I can go in and get it. It will only take half a minute."

"No," said Lajla.

"I can go through the back window, get the drum and then put the glass back in place."

"No."

"I could at least go up and see if it's there. Just take a look."

"Don't do it," said Lajla.

"But why, if the drum is there?"

"You mustn't do it."

"It won't take long. Give me five minutes," he said. "The window frame is rotten, the caulking is cracked. I only have to bend a few nails and before you know it, I'll be inside and up in the loft and in one, two, three, I will have made my necessary investigation."

"It is not right to break in."

"I'm not going to steal anything."

"I wonder about that," said Lajla.

"I want to see if this is the drum I'm searching for. I have the right to do that."

"Please don't do it. It's not right," she said. "Not now." But he was already looking for his knife.

"Why not now?"

"Someone might come."

"I'll take the chance." He found the knife and went behind the house. She followed. He slid the knife under a nail, bent it out of the rotten frame with one motion.

"Besides, what's wrong with stealing it?" he asked.

Just then a fly flew out of a crack in the wall, right into Jon's face. It was big, sluggish and blue. Every time he tried to swat it, it dashed out of the way, glistening in the sun like a flying evil spirit.

Jon pulled out another nail as the fly kept buzzing him. Then it flew into his ear and was gone.

Lajla heard the sound of a car.

The man was younger than Jon remembered. He was probably not even fifty but the deep wrinkle in his forehead made him look older. He was also larger than he had seemed in the darkness last night. His eyes were grayish-green and sharp. Jon felt them on him. He was being weighed and measured just as carefully as he, himself, examined the man in front of him. He knew, suddenly, that the man was more than his match. The man exuded a power that gave him a dominating, almost paralyzing presence. Jon was glad he was standing by the car outside the house instead of being caught red-handed inside. At the same time, it felt like the man was able to see his hidden plans. Jon understood that this person had other morals than the ones which inhibited him: Thou shall not steal.

"We were looking for this, lost it yesterday." Jon showed him the knife.

The woman walked into the house. The man remained outside.

"Then we decided to wait for you."

"No, you did not."

"I really wanted to take another look at the drum. Once before, I saw a shamanic drum. That was about ten or fifteen years ago."

"Why do you want to see it?"

"It looked so old and nice. It must be a collector's item. I have seen these drums in museums. That's why I would really appreciate it if you shared its story with me."

"I know why you are here," responded the man.

"Of course." Jon pretended not to understand the implication in the man's answer.

"In the future, you'd better make sure that you neither get lost nor lose anything."

"I don't think you understand," tried Jon.

The man placed his artificial hand on the hood of the car and stared at Jon.

"You can play the idiot from here to eternity. But it is I who have the drum."

"How did it come into your hands, then?"

"That's none of your business. Stay out of it. You will never know. You will never see the drum again. Don't ever come back here," he said.

"I don't think it's right for you to keep the drum."

"Why?" The man sounded suspicious now.

"Because only people with healthy limbs are supposed to own a drum like this," answered Jon.

"So that's what you think," he said menacingly and pulled his hand back. "It would be best for you to forget that you ever saw it. If you even think about coming here again, you will have a visitor."

"A visitor?" Jon tried to make his voice sound confused. But inside, he felt cold as ice. He knew what that statement implied. He was being threatened.

"It will be more than a threat next time." The man walked toward the front door.

"You seem to lose your head just as fast as you lost your hand." The words fell out of Jon's mouth.

Almost before he had finished his sentence, the man spun around with speed and agility unusual for a man of his age.

"Many before you have shown me a knife and regretted it." The voice was surprisingly calm as if he were only stating a fact.

They drove down the valley, along the fjord and into the village. Jon filled the gas tank and paid with a credit card.

"I was terrified," said Lajla.

"I didn't threaten him. It was he who threatened me, that I would get a visitor."

"What does that mean?"

"It means a killer will come."

"I wonder what he is hiding," said Lajla.

"Well, I am not going to hide anything any more. It felt good to say what I said. I don't regret it for one second."

"He got plenty of information out of you, but you didn't get anything out of him," said Lajla.

"I found out what I needed. You were right yesterday. He is an evil man. To threaten to send a visitor is a language spoken among enemies. He is not a fox; he is a wolf. You were right."

The road continued up from the fjord, up through a valley surrounded by cultivated fields. A flock of sheep grazed in the withering grass.

Through the valley where the road was built, a river had its course. It threw itself in rapids and waterfalls, down from the mountains. The most spectacular waterfalls could not be seen from the road. You had to walk up along the ravine to find them. For thousands of years the river had carved out a canyon filled with waterfalls, calm, deep holes and strange stone formations.

"One day Heaika and I went searching for a place supposedly located somewhere in this ravine. There is a cave or some sort of special place here where one can see into the other world. It is from the tribal religion that Christianity developed its picture of Paradise," said Jon.

"Oh."

"Have you heard about the Grandfather Stone?"

"No."

"There is supposed to be a sieidi here somewhere. Just by being next to it enables one to see into the future."

"You know a lot today," answered Lajla.

The road wound in gentle turns up through the birch-covered hillsides of the Hellig Forest. When they came higher up, they had

a view of the whole mountain range. A lavvo\* was standing on a mountain ridge, silhouetted against the horizon. This simple dwelling blended perfectly with its surroundings.

They stopped the car at a scenic point, stepped out into the sunshine and the wind.

"Wow, there is already snow on the peaks," he said.

"Everything must return to the earth." Lajla was pointing at a birch with red and yellow leaves.

"Even the sun will disappear beneath the earth."

"Do you remember the legend where the Sun God travels beneath the horizon into the inner earth?" he asked.

"There are not many left who still believe that a sun can be found in the inner earth," answered Lajla.

"The wisdom is coming back."

Far down below lay a large lake, deep blue in the autumn sun. Beyond it, the tundra was rolling toward the steep coastal mountains. The sky was big the way it can only be experienced on the high plains.

"How clear everything seems today," said Lajla.

They stood there awhile longer without saying anything more. The color of the sky changed from pale, pale blue to pink to a dark, dark violet.

"What a refreshing wind." Jon smelled the breeze sweeping across the mountains.

"I was really frightened down there." Lajla wrapped her arms around him, held him tight.

"Let the wind carry it away," said Jon.

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\* For a definition of this word and others not defined in text, see Glossary, p. 251.





*A traditional summer hat for men.*

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THERE WAS SOMETHING majestic about the mountain Saanen, which lay on the Finnish side of the border. The mountain was not especially high but had a shape that dominated the landscape and caught one's eye. It looked like an animal's back, hunched up ready to spring.

As they came closer to the mountain, the profile took on a more rounded form. It looked like the top of an underground skull as it stuck up through the tundra. On the top grew heather and moss. But the sides of the mountain were so steep and slick that not even the hardy plants of the tundra could find an ounce of sod to bury their roots in.

"This mountain has a soul," said Jon.

Lajla got out a lipstick, adjusted the mirror behind the sun visor and painted her lips. Then she let the brush slide through her long hair.

"Don't you want to stop at Liisa and Heaika's?" She put the red lipstick back into her purse.

"It was my understanding that you wanted to stop in," answered Jon.

"Even if you think she talks too much, you ought to keep in touch. At least with Heaika. Isn't he an old friend?"

"Absolutely."

"It is more than a year since we have been here."

"Yes, I know."

"You can sit by the window and look at your mountain," she giggled.

"Let's make it quick, though," added Jon hastily.

They stopped in front of the red house. A black dog came barking toward the van.

"He recognizes us." The dog was wagging its tail while sniffing and licking Lajla's hand with a narrow, red tongue.

By each plate lay gnawed knuckles. They had obviously been eating reindeer meat. Heaika cleared the table and gave the dog the bones to chew on. Then he put coffee on.

"These gnawed bones," Jon told them, "remind me of a wolf skeleton I once saw in a swamphole when I was a kid. I must have been five or six years old. The sun made the wolf's teeth shine."

"It reminds me of dreams I had as a little girl," said Lajla.

"What dreams?" asked Liisa.

"I dreamed I was in the mountains. It was on a winter night with a full moon. Then I heard a wolf howl. I was frightened and began to run home as fast as my little legs could move. I knew the wolves were behind me. Finally, I reached home and ran up the stairs. Then I felt the breath of the wolf on my neck."

Just then, the door opened up and a man entered quietly. Liisa and Heaika got up and shook hands with the stranger. They stood and talked together while Lajla and Jon remained at the table.

"I feel like leaving soon. That way we can avoid driving half the night again," said Jon. Lajla nodded.

The stranger came walking over with a curious look under his bushy eyebrows. He greeted Lajla first, then Jon. Jon didn't catch the man's name. Liisa seemed unusually excited.

"How did your dream end, Lajla?" she asked.

"The door was locked. Here I was at the top of the stairs, so close to safety yet seemingly doomed. Just when the wolves were about to sink their teeth into my flesh, I woke up."

"You see," Liisa explained to the stranger, "just before you came, she was telling us about a dream. How she was chased by wolves across a moonlit tundra. What do you think this means?" she asked.

At this moment, the coffee boiled over. Heaika ran to the stove and lifted the kettle from the burner while the aroma of coffee spread

throughout the room. Then he came back with the kettle and filled the cups.

"Do you feel it was a bad dream?" The stranger dropped a sugar cube into his coffee cup.

"At that time I was frightened. Now I almost miss the dream," replied Lajla.

"I have both heard and seen wolves, real wolves and wolf spirits in dreams," said the stranger. He blew on the steaming cup and took a careful sip. "It is not right to claim that the wolf represents the Devil. The wolf doesn't kill people and it cannot kill healthy reindeer either. It takes the weak and, thereby, keeps the reindeer herd strong. The wolf has a right to live. This is Nature's Law."

"And the wolf spirits?" asked Liisa.

"They are runners. They stick their noses into everything. They cannot be tamed. They like to dance in the moonlight."

Jon had also dreamed about animals. It was a dream from those strange nights when he was ten or eleven years old. Never again have the nights been so dark.

"Our friend here is sitting in deep thought. Perhaps he has something to tell us?" The stranger suddenly looked at Jon.

"Once upon a time, I had a furry friend. He lived in a cave, a place known only to him and me. A place far, far away from everyone else."

"What does this dream mean, then?" Liisa looked at the stranger but he remained silent.

In the silence, Jon could hear a fly buzzing, or perhaps it was his imagination, after all.

The coffee cups were empty. Lajla looked at Jon with restless eyes. But now he was in no hurry. There was something about this man who was talking so matter-of-factly about dreams and spirits. What did he know?

"Do you still have your furry friend?" asked the man finally.

"Yes." Jon was surprised both by the question and his own answer. He had more he wanted to say.

Lajla got up, wanted to leave.

He wished she would not disturb the mood and the connection between him and the stranger. It was suddenly important that it continue as long as possible.

"If we want to get there before midnight, we'd better start driving soon," said Lajla.

"Do you need to be in such a hurry?" asked Heaika.

"Stay overnight," begged Liisa.

"The plan was to get home today," said Lajla.

"Are we in such a hurry?" Jon tried to let this out as carefully as possible.

"I thought you were the one who wanted to get home today."

"I would like to stay."

Lajla gave him a look of resignation and sat back down. Liisa smiled and Heaika picked up the coffee cups. Jon settled back into the mood. He wished it would last forever. Then the stranger suddenly got up and left, walked out the door without a word of goodbye. He disappeared just as quietly as he had appeared.

Jon felt he was caught in a time warp.

"I knew you would like him. He usually tells many interesting stories," said Heaika.

"But he just left without a word," said Jon.

"That's the way Abraha is," explained Liisa.

Jon and Heaika were outside, competing with a lasso made of green polyethylene. The target was a reindeer antler attached to a pole. The distance was about ten meters. Heaika made eight of his ten first tries. Then Jon took the lasso, coiled it up.

"You used to be good at this," said Heaika after watching Jon miss a few times.

"I haven't thrown a lasso since our last competition. That is more than a year ago," replied Jon.

"You used to beat me. Now I beat you."

Jon had done better before. He was, at one time, a master in getting the lasso loop to open into a perfect O. Now the rope got tangled or slid out in a narrow oval that landed next to the horn's sharp spikes. He hit it once in a while but five tries out of ten were just not good enough.

It irritated him that Heaika was so much better than he and that Heaika rubbed it in by letting him know, even though it was true.

"I'm going to get it this time," he said to himself, tried again and missed. But Heaika was able to make the coiled rope sail lightly and effortlessly through the air, and the loop opened through the lasso ring and landed around the horns without touching them.

How could he have forgotten a skill he had once mastered?

Lajla came out to watch them and naturally, he threw even worse.

The whole time, he wondered why the stranger had left so suddenly. He could never get used to people who would walk right in and then leave without saying goodbye.

Heaika made nine out of ten and Lajla made six out of ten.

Then Jon finally made some good throws. It got exciting. The lasso behaved as an extension of his hand and arm.

But the result was not much better in the end. The lasso got tangled, the loop did not open when it was supposed to, and when it finally did, it landed next to the pole with the horn.

"What am I doing wrong?"

"You are trying too hard," said Heaika. "Your forehead is full of wrinkles and the muscles in your arm are tense. That's part of the problem."

Again, Heaika coiled up the lasso and, without effort and with a smile on his face, swung his arm in an arc from the shoulder, and the polyethylene rope shot forward. Heaika jerked the rope, pulled the line tight and gripped it across his hips as he pulled with his body.

"Got it," he said.



Then it was Lajla's turn and the rope caught the outer spike. But it did not slide off. It stayed. It was a hit. Jon tried once more and missed.

"You also don't like to lose," said Heaika.

The evening came with pink and purple skies. Saanen resembled a large head with a halo. The air was getting cooler.

"Do you have a lasso?" asked Heaika while coiling up the slick, green rope.

"Not any more."

"Take this one. You need to practice. I know you can do better than this," said Heaika, coiled up the lasso and gave it to Jon.

Lajla and Jon walked down the path that led to the large lake below the house. The boat was tied to the pier. He rowed out toward the island in the middle of the lake, wanting to take a look at the strange stone there between the birch trees.

"You are a strange one," said Lajla.

"Why?"

"First you say you want to leave. Then you suddenly change your mind. Then we aren't leaving. Now I hope you don't decide to leave in the middle of the night."

"I just felt like staying."

"Was it because of that man?"

"Yes."

"And then the minute you changed your mind, he left?"

"Yes."

"That serves you right," she giggled.

"You are a lovable creep."

"No, I'm just a precious little ptarmigan chick who had a feeling something was going to happen."

"Hindsight," snorted Jon.

"It was a test for your sixth sense," she answered.

He did not have anything more to add. He knew she could not be silenced. Her words hung in the stillness. He heard the sound of the ripples. Four ducks came sailing low above them in the dusk and made a long, dark landing strip in the mirror-like surface of the water.

Then the moon peaked over the mountains across the border in Sweden, clear and almost transparent, in a color that does not exist, not white, not yellow, not blue, not pink. It sailed in a gentle arc above the mountains. Far away, a dog was barking. A car drove past up on the road.

Suddenly, Lajla put his head in her hands and kissed him. Kissed him passionately. She pulled off her sweater and shirt in one motion. Her upper body was lit up by the pale moonlight. Her breasts, moving and alive, changed their center of gravity as she stood up.

This aroused him and she knew it.

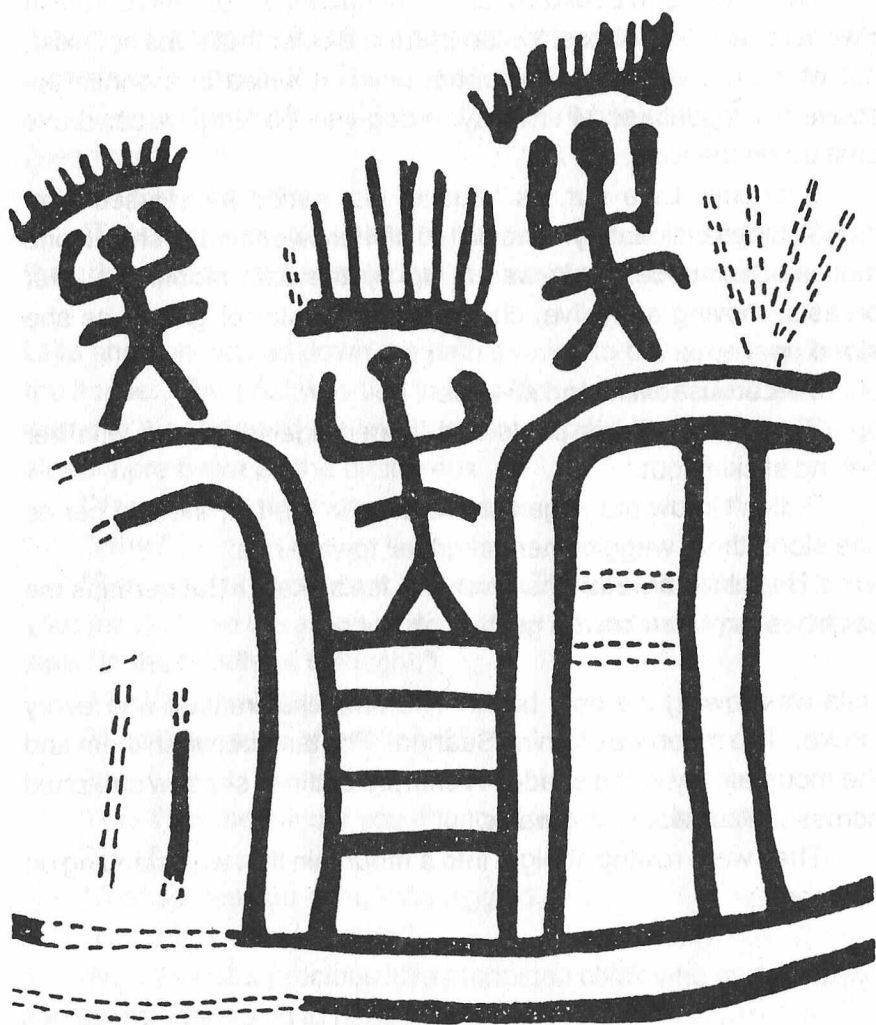
She kicked off her pants and leaned against a rock with her behind sticking out.

"I didn't know ptarmigan chicks bred in the fall," he told her as she stood there wagging her naked tail toward him.

"This chick breeds whenever she feels like it. But perhaps the cock has forgotten how to get the job done."

Lajla was rowing the boat back. The oarlocks creaked with every stroke. The moon was behind Saanen. The land between them and the mountain lay in the shade. A sharply-outlined shadow stretched across the surface of the water.

They were rowing straight into a mountain that was standing on its head.



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THE HOUSE WAS asleep and the silence absorbed all sound. The stillness rose from the earth up into the sky and swallowed everything, the creaking of the walls, the ticking of the kitchen clock and Lajla's breathing as she slept.

The only thing that did not disappear was his restlessness.

He wanted to go to sleep but his eyes were wide open. So he took a book from their traveling library, held the pages up to the moonlight. After reading for a while, he noticed that the words and letters were becoming blurry. He could no longer comprehend what he was reading. He could not remember anything of what had been written on the pages. He put the book down and found another one. It opened itself and his eyes fell on a page at random. The text was written in small print and in a language from the last century.

"All such Fells," he read, "be deemed sacred by the Finns and they call them Saivo. The cause for why these Fells be sacred is: Satan hath made them believeth that inside such Fells liveth a holy Angel or a lesser God and it is behovable to protect them and help them with whatever they themselves undertake."

He had gotten hold of a book about mythology. It was obviously written by a priest since Satan was considered the greatest of threats. This epoch in history passed, in review, before his eyes. The threats had lost their power today. What he read did not provoke him but made him sleepier. Once more, he held up the book and began to struggle through the text.

"From these Fell-Angels the Finn chose one or two or sometimes three or four that he with the help of a certain Joiking did call forth when he needed to do something and especially when he wanted to beat on his Runnebomme or in any other way wanted to address Satan."



Several times, he had to start this sentence over until, finally, he made it through and understood its meaning. Why were they so frugal with their punctuation marks in the old days?

"No Finn is without his Saivo."

The room was poorly lit. The letters were small and were almost fading away. But at least, he did understand that the Sami, after death, hoped to be allowed into the holy mountain. There his helping spirits were waiting for him. This chapter ended with a long harangue about Satan and eternal Damnation for their lost souls. It also told what was done and what must be done to free these souls from damnation. For Jon, it was sleeping medicine to keep struggling through this text.

The noaide was the big, bad wolf that had to be caught. He made people follow the ways of the ancestors. They should speak their own language. They should hold on to their way of life. They should dress only in their traditional costumes. This was what the noaide wanted. But God did not speak the Sami language. The drums had to be burned. Jon yawned. He was on the verge of falling asleep. He had heard it all before.

"Thus after death they deem that inside Saivo they will be made Gods," he read before he put the book down.

However, Noaide was a word the Church had not been able to wash away, in spite of all the threats. Now a new era had begun. He was searching for knowledge in a place deeper in the womb of history than Christianity. He wanted first-hand experiences. If he could only find the openings. There was another reality. He thought of Nangiala, the land of the warriors. The land with the flickering fires. There was a man called Tengel there. He was evil. A stallion was always wandering through all the tribal pictures.

Jon did not even know the name of the man with the drum.

Neither did he know the opening to the other side.

Jon was awakened by a knock on the window. He sat up, pulled the curtain to the side and looked straight into the eyes of an owl. It sat

on the windowsill, staring at him, motionlessly, with green eyes. These eyes stirred something that had been sleeping for many years.

He flew out through the eyes of the owl, across the lake and the island in a big sweeping arch. Then he saw Saanen before him. He knew the profile from countless road trips and from rowing on the lake last night. Still, the mountain seemed different now, as if it were moving.

Then the owl again tapped its beak on the glass, slipped down from the sill and disappeared.

Jon put on his clothes, jumped as the floorboards creaked. His experience of flying had felt natural, real and without drama. Still, surprising.

The autumn air was fresh and cool. The moon had disappeared. He was looking in through the window from the outside. Inside, Lajla was sleeping on the bed. The book stood on the shelf. On the ground below the window lay a small curved feather, light as a snowflake.

Jon began to walk toward the mountain. He crossed the road and found a path leading toward the foothills. The mountain grew and its presence felt heavier the closer he got.

The path led him through a birch forest toward the mountain that rose naked and steep, out of the earth. Over time, huge stones as large as cabins and houses had loosened and fallen down from above. They had created a field of boulders between the birch forest and the mountain wall. The path wound its way through the boulders and along the black mountain.

He jumped when a bird flew up in front of his feet. With sharpened senses, he continued on.

Stones were falling from the dark mountain above him and came tumbling down through the birch forest. Then it was quiet. Suddenly there was a rock slide. It thundered and crashed as large blocks of

stone slid and jumped from a great height. The ground shook under his feet as the avalanche of rock pounded against the ground. He could hear how the birches cracked. After a while, the last stones, gravel and sand came to rest. The smell of scorched stone drifted away.

He lost the path between the boulders but kept climbing upward. Finally, it seemed like the path was completely blocked. But then, mysteriously, it was as if a large boulder opened, divided down the middle. The crack was just wide enough to walk through. The uneven stone was cool on the surface but held a protectedness, a steadfastness inside of it.

Suddenly, he was up on a plateau. He smelled smoke. It had to be coming from the rock slide or from the houses down below in the dark bowl. The lake, far below, resembled a black mirror. A dog suddenly came out of the dark, sniffed him and disappeared. Then he saw a lavvo. The smoke came from there. He walked up to it.

Inside burned a fire. In the flickering light of the flames the man called Abraha was sitting. Then Jon recognized him. It was he who had appeared in his dream the night before.

"You found the way through the darkness," said Abraha.

"Yes."

"I decided to make a fire," he continued.

Jon sat down next to the fire which by now was burning brightly.

"The mountain moved," said the stranger.

"What?"

"It doesn't happen very often that the mountain moves as much as it did tonight," continued the man by the fire.

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HE WAS BACK to sitting on the ground, not in a car seat, not in a chair. The embers were glowing inside the firepit, not in the belly of a stove. This was the way his ancestors had been sitting. Not only his ancestors, but everyone's ancestors. Staring at the coals after the hunt, after work. They had cooked on the fire, told the future in the coals or thrown their disappointment into the flames.

It grew darker in the tent. Shadows covered the face on the other side of the fire. From somewhere he could hear the dog making noises in its sleep. Jon could not think of anything to say. Then the man remained in silence. The fire whistled. Then the man got up as if he had been given a signal and walked outside.

Jon followed him across the plateau up toward the boulder field. When they stopped, the man bent down. At first, Jon thought rainwater had collected in a bowl in the stone. But it was a spring.

"It never freezes, not even in the coldest winters," said the stranger and sipped a few handfuls of water. Then he rubbed water in his eyes.

"Water is good for the sight."

Jon stuck his hand into the spring. The water was cool. It tasted fresh.

"It is also good for the hearing," Abraha washed his ears. Jon also washed his ears, but not his eyes.

Abraha walked on, upward between the boulders. It was a small path leading into a narrow crevice. The crevice ended in a diagonal crack in the mountain. He walked in through the crack and Jon followed. The cave began to slope down, became narrower and narrower.

Jon suddenly heard a song in the darkness in front of him. It must be Abraha joiking. But where was Abraha? He was gone. Jon felt a breathing on his neck. He froze. There was something behind

him in the tunnel. He stood absolutely still in the narrow opening, as if the mountain had taken him in its grip and held him fast with superhuman strength.

Jon freed himself from this spell and shouted for Abraha. But he received no answer. His voice drowned in the darkness around him. Slowly, he felt his way deeper into the dark. He realized the tunnel was branching into several passages. Which way should he take? Jon stopped, listened for the stranger. He heard only a whisper, a whisper that became a song.

He felt so small inside this mountain. Alone. In the dark. Beneath the weight of many hundred thousand tons of stone. The only thing he had as a guide was the sound of the joiking. It was probably Abraha playing a trick on him in the cave.

As he took another step into the dark, he fell forward. He suddenly felt weightless, lighter than air, falling and falling down through the tunnel. The tunnel spiraled downward, narrowing and widening. Then he realized he could change his size, be large or small, whatever was needed.

He saw a light far below him. It raced toward him with tremendous speed.

Jon knew he was lying on his stomach in pitch darkness in a cave, his face and hands in loose sand. Part of him was still floating toward a light deep down in the belly of the mountain. Finally, he landed in a big room lit by a fire.

Around the fire four people were sitting playing with the flames. They picked them up with their hands and let them lick up their arms. Then they sent the flames back into the fire. All they had to do was point and the flames burned in the direction they pointed. One of them took the flames in both hands, let them flicker up his arms, shoulders and head until his whole body was covered in flames.

Then one of the four pointed to Jon. He called himself Jov. Jov brought forth a drum, began to beat on it with a Y-shaped hammer. A voice coming from the belly of the drum asked the fire to stop

burning. It grew dark in the mountain. The starry sky appeared. On the darkest dark of the autumn sky hung the most brilliant ones of all the glittering stars. Three of them began to spin around and around to the rhythm of the drum. They blended their light with each other until it created a fire high up at the crest of the sky. Suddenly, from that light a ray of flames shot down toward the men sitting in the opened mountain. With a frightening roar, the fire fell from the stars. Their campfire was re-lit.

Jov laughed, put the drum down.

As the images faded, Jon regained the feeling and the weight of his body. Now he had to find his way out of the mountain. He heard a calming joik. When he saw the flickering flames, he thought he was back with the four fire masters. But on the other side of the fire sat Abraha. Jon looked around, noticed he was lying on a hide beside the fire in the tent.

"How did I get here?"

"You have been here the whole time."

"But I have been inside the mountain. There I met a man with a drum that could talk," said Jon.

"I see," replied Abraha.

"Didn't we go into a cave?"

"We walked to the spring."

"But after that, we went into a cave?"

"After that, we returned to the tent."

"Someone joiked," said Jon.

"I joiked," answered the man.

Jon had to know more about this man and the magical joik. He told him who he was and where he was from. He was born in Royehodet, he said. It was the name of a mountain. His mother died giving birth. He never knew his father.

Abraha reacted as if he already knew this.

"What is your name?" asked Jon.

"Antti."



"Liisa called you something else?"

"What?"

"Abraha."

Jon felt uneasy. Perhaps it was a nickname, a name he did not like. Instead, he should have asked about the mysterious joik.

"You have two names also," said Abraha.

"I have only one name, Jon."

"You have another name."

"Are you thinking of Jovna?"

"You are called Banzo," said Abraha.

"Banzo?"

"Have you never heard it before?"

They stood outside the lavvo. The stars were fading in the sky. Abraha turned away, relieved himself, and steam rose from the ground. He was ready to go back into the tent. Jon's soul was full of impressions and his head was full of questions. What did Banzo mean? And Abraha?

"Do you know three stars that can spit fire?" he asked.

Abraha pointed to Orion's Belt.

"There," he said.

"I saw it happen when I was in the mountain."

"Were there any star-dancers there?"

"Who are they?"

"They dance on the stars."

"No, everyone sat on the ground."

"How about the sunbeam travelers?"

"There was no sunshine."

"They can make the sun shine in the middle of the night if they want to."

"Where do they travel on the sunbeams?"

"To a place beyond the sun and the stars where the wisdom is found."

Abraha walked toward the tent.

"I have to ask you one more thing," Jon quickly added.

Abraha turned, stopped.

"Does my name, I mean Banzo, have any special meaning?"

"A reindeer bull with large horns in the fall. The bull is in rut," said Abraha matter-of-factly.

"And what does your name mean, Abraha?"

"You want to know more than Liisa," he said. "Abraha is the name of the rarest reindeer found in any herd. They are the androgynous, white ones."

The ground was frozen as he walked the path down to the house. The feeling of night was disappearing. But morning was in no hurry to come. He liked the name Banzo. He saw before him the reindeer bull. There were many of them on the tundra now as the rut was becoming more intense. But he had never seen an androgynous reindeer and a white one besides.

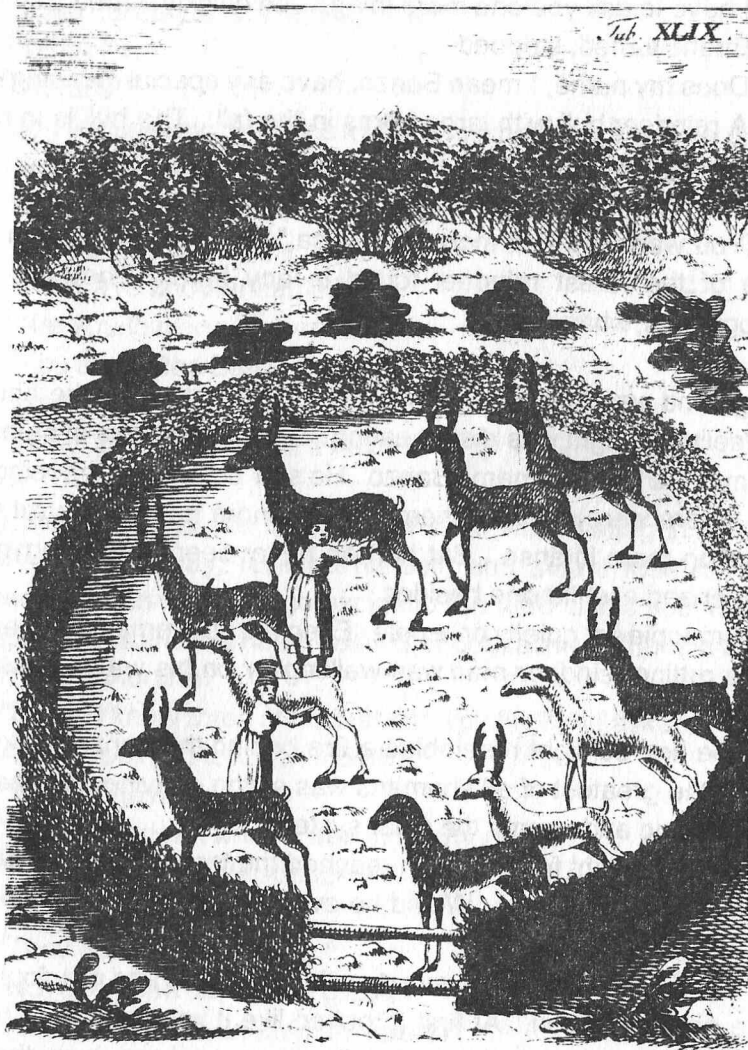
A magpie sat quietly on a pole. Even the dog remained sleeping as the rutting reindeer-man was walking by on his way across the spit.

The first sunlight resembled a fire behind the horizon. Somewhere, the greatest of all shamans was sitting, playing with the fire that lights up and warms the solar system.

Then the light from the sun reached the top of the mountain he had just been exploring. Would he ever learn to travel on the rays that pierce the darkness?

Slowly, the crest of the sun grew larger, round and red, found its place on the horizon. At first it looked like it was unable to break free. Jon began to joik the sun's joik. Then, as if on wings, the sun climbed over the horizon. It was almost like it received new strength from the joik. As the light broke free and the rays hit the valleys, the sun itself lost its intense color. It faded. Morning had come.

Jon had forgotten to ask to be taught the magical joik. This he needed to do soon, later that day if possible. He simply had to see Abraha again. It would be necessary to stay at least one more night.



*Milking reindeer in a reindeer pen. (Leem 1767)*

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"I WOULD NEVER have had the courage to look him up," said Liisa.

They had eaten breakfast. Jon told them about his adventure inside the cave.

"Weren't you afraid of being lost in there forever, never finding your way out?" asked Liisa.

"Everything happened so fast. I didn't have time to think. One thing led to another."

"You were brave."

"If the owl hadn't tapped on the window, I wouldn't have gone outside. That's how it all began," said Jon.

"At least last night," added Lajla.

"What a coincidence that he stopped in yesterday. He has only been here a couple of times before," Heaika told them.

"But do you know what Abraha means?" Jon looked at Liisa.

"It is just a nickname. I don't think it means anything special. Do you know what it means?" she asked Heaika.

"Probably the strange one," answered Heaika.

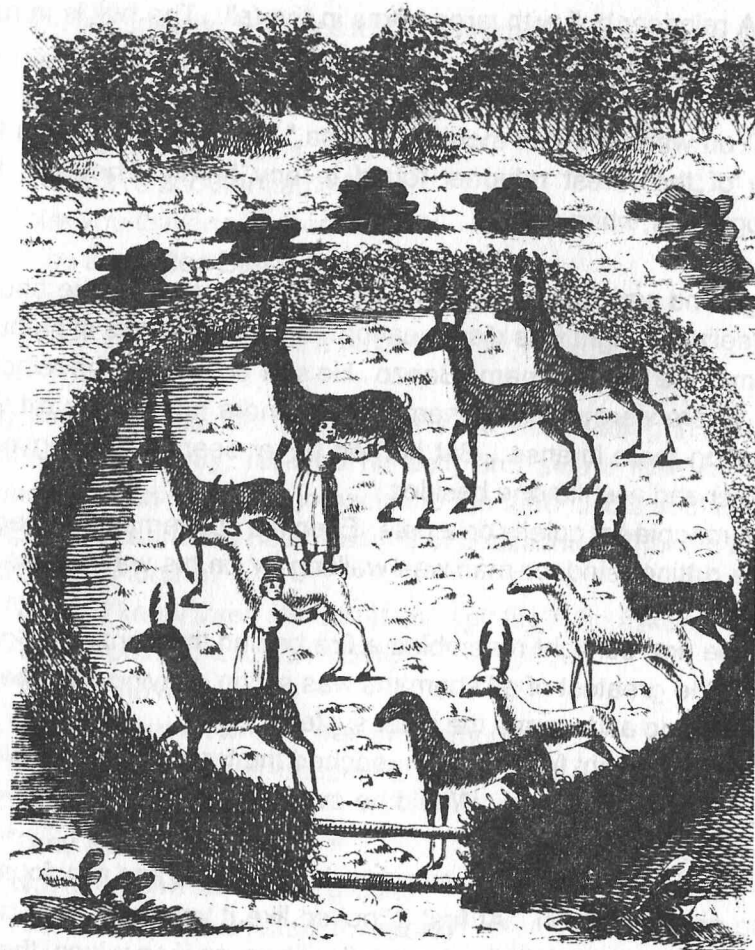
"Yes, the odd one," said Liisa. "At one time he was rich. Then he lost everything, got sick and turned mad. Isn't that right, Heaika? All summer he lives alone in a cabin behind the mountain. I don't think he likes it when people call him Abraha."

"Are you familiar with this cave?"

"I have heard that there is a cave someplace, but I don't know where it is." Heaika shook his head.

"There is also a spring there. A spring in the middle of the mountain that doesn't freeze no matter how cold it gets," said Jon.

"That is news to me," replied Heaika.



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Lajla wanted to visit the island again before they left. But she wanted to get home today because her parents were expecting her.

"Smell the air," Lajla inhaled the essence of wind and water and warmth of the sun.

"It is hard to believe that Heaika didn't know where the cave was. And the spring."

"That is rather odd."

"Heaika has lived here his whole life."

"Did they really know what the name meant?" Lajla gave him an inquisitive look.

"No."

"What does the name mean?"

"It is the name of a white, androgynous reindeer, the rarest animal in the herd."

"You are lucky you met him."

"He was looking for me."

"How is that?"

"Do you remember the man I saw in my dream yesterday before he woke up?"

"Was that him?"

"Yes."

Jon untied the lines, pushed the boat out and took the oars.

"Look how the colors are being reflected in the water," she said.

"It won't be long now."

"When we get home we'll row over to the gamme. Can we stay there, Jon?"

"Fine with me."

"Can we stay there tomorrow night?"

"We'll see."

The boat scraped against the gravel bank around the island. Lajla jumped ashore and pulled the boat in. They walked up to the cave they had visited last night and many nights before.

"I want to go soon," she said.

"We'll see."

In the sunshine, the stone didn't seem so unusual. Even the fact that it rested on four smaller stones and did not touch the ground at all did not seem that odd. Nevertheless, it made the stone and the island into something special.

"Isn't it strange they didn't know about the cave and the spring?" asked Jon again.

"Now you are getting carried away. They can't know everything. They knew about this stone, didn't they? They wouldn't show this stone to just anyone," she said.

"Do you think many people know about this place?"

"I'm sure some people do," replied Lajla, "but I believe in the power of secrets. Do you remember the first time we came here? Something happened that night."

"What amazes me is that the wisdom is kept secret. Even today. I understand it was necessary during the religious wars. But not any more. Now we need all of life's wisdom to repel the black magic of destruction."

"People say the wisdom is lost."

"It's here," said Jon.

"Is there something you haven't told me about last night?" she asked.

"The wisdom is inside the mountain. It's also in the sun. Abraha said you can even walk on the rays of the sun."

"I don't understand what you are talking about."

"The mountain is inhabited. There were people in there, sitting by the fire. They were joiking the most beautiful joik I have ever heard. I can't remember how it goes. I'm sure Abraha does," he said.

Lajla looked at the sun. She stood up.

"Wouldn't you like to see him again?" asked Jon.

"Not today."

"I have so much I want to ask him."

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"Not today."

"I have so much I want to ask him."



"That must wait till later."

"Can't we stay just one more night? I can show you the cave. Or we can stay overnight out here. It'll be like the first time we came. A dark night with twinkling stars, just like before. And something will surely happen."

"I want to leave. Besides, they are expecting us."

"What if I have already decided to stay?"

"Damn you, Jon. So far, you have made all the decisions. Now I will decide. I'm going home and you are coming."

"Our ancestors speak to me here, don't you understand?" Jon looked at her impatiently.

"I'm talking about my parents. People who count on us. Don't you feel any responsibility toward them any more?"

Jon had no answer.

"It is easy for you to talk like this because you don't have any parents," said Lajla.

She had made up her mind. He had to leave even though he wanted to stay. Next time, he would need more time. He walked down to the boat, sat in the stern and waited for Lajla. This had become their pattern. He rowed the boat out to the island, she home.

Lajla stayed by the stone. He sat in the back of the boat and waited. Wasn't she the one who was in such a hurry?

"Aren't you coming?" he shouted but she did not answer.

Finally, she appeared, picked up the oars. She took a few vigorous strokes, then pulled the oars in.

"Look what I have been given." She held up a stone between two fingers. "A frozen bluebell." She held it toward the light, turned it around.

"Where did you find it?"

Lajla kissed the stone, put it in her shirt pocket and began to row.

"I found it by our special stone."

"Did you take it?"

"No, it was a gift."

"You took it."

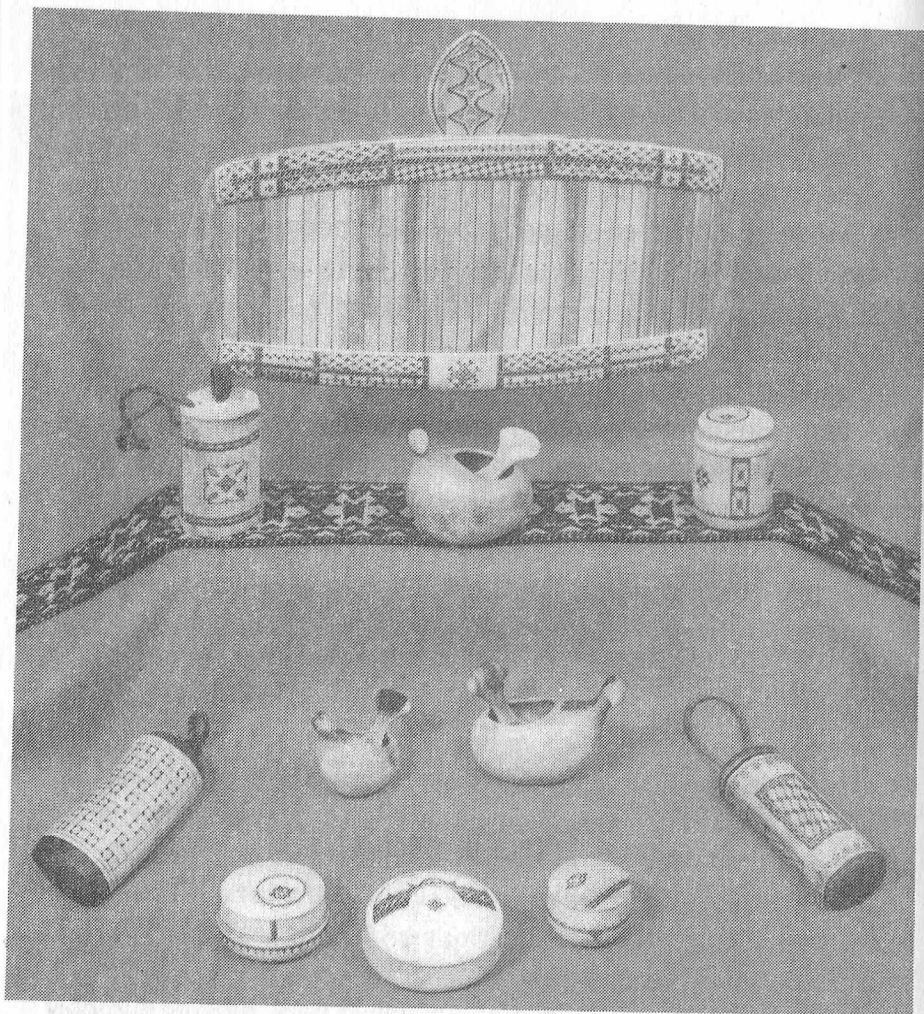
"It jumped into my hand."

"Be serious."

"We have been by this stone at least ten times. Never before have we seen a bluebell-shaped stone. Someone gave it to me, whoever it was."

They packed their things.

Jon took the book from the bookshelf and put it into the large, black bag. He always brought a selection of books along when he traveled. He no longer found much satisfaction in his newspaper job, had begun to write for himself, mostly poetry. To him the most spiritual way of expression.



*Weaving frame and objects made of horn. Ornaments hand-engraved with knife; pattern accented by rubbing mixture of ground alder bark, possibly ash and water, into carvings.*

LAJLA DROVE. THE miles disappeared behind them while Jon was absorbed in thought.

Parallel to our concept of present-time reality exists what he called mythological present time, a reality where everything happened outside time and space, as in the moment of creation. It is all there inside us, a landscape that needs light to be seen or a dream in order to become real. Many feel that this tradition is dead. But it is part of life and we are part of it. The wisdom is not controlled by people. It destines them, programs them, guides them, and shapes them.

There are also people who make contact with helpers appearing in the form of animals. This is how the Bear Ritual must be understood. The bear is the most powerful animal, unaffected by almost anything. He is the king. The bear spends almost half of the year beneath the earth. During this time, he can be found in the mythological time or Saivo, the realm of the forefathers. The bear also has its sign in the sky.

There were so many who misunderstood when the subject of power animals came up. It did not have anything to do with the physical bear but with the bear spirit.

They passed through the last few communities in Finland. Here pine forest surrounded the cultivated fields and the sparkling lakes. On the Norwegian side, only birch grew as far as the eye could see.

He had come close to something. He had seen a drum and met a man with two names. Now he was driving away from it. Why didn't he stay behind with Liisa and Heaika? Find answers to all the questions he had in his heart?

"I forgot something. We have to turn around," he said.

"You must be kidding." She drove on.

"I forgot what the mountain looks like."

"That's all?" She drove fast.

"Perhaps I should have stayed behind," he said.

"I can't wait to get home," she replied.

"It's like interrupting a good hunt when you are on a hot trail."

"I'm sure they are excited that we are coming."

"The trail could have led me to the drum and now we are moving away from it," continued Jon.

"You've got to be kidding! You certainly don't believe you can find this drum the same way elkhounds track down moose, do you?"

The car flew along the dry asphalt, through new communities, past a long lake. The sun was on its way down. They crossed a well-known river and arrived in Kautokeino. A few miles away stood the mountain where he was born.

"Shall we stop for a cup of coffee?"

"We'll have one when we get there," answered Lajla and turned on the lights.

"We could at least look for the house where I saw the drum that first time," he suggested.

"I want to go home,"

"You can surely spare three minutes."

"No."

The village disappeared behind them. Again, they crossed the river at a bridge over a waterfall. Kjelefossen.

"Do you have doubts about me finding the drum?" Jon asked after a while.

Then Lajla looked at him for the first time in the course of the long afternoon on the road.

"If it wants you to come to it, it will find you. Then it will fall into your hand just like the bluebell-shaped stone did to me."

In a sharp curve outside a small village they ran into a long row of luminous warning signs. This was new since they were here last. After still another hour of driving, they reached the county she grew up in. She drove across another river, turned left.

Memories came at her from each curve. Every time she drove here, she was amazed how gradual the hills really were. They had seemed so steep when she bicycled there as a young girl.

She could remember so many bonfires by the river. She recalled a boy who had driven her home on his motorcycle. It was autumn. He had stopped and then they had walked up under an overhanging rock...

The car rolled from asphalt over to a graveled road. The closer she came, the more homeless she felt. Somewhere here, she had lost something during her childhood.

Lajla pulled over, turned off the motor and the lights. On the left side, the river curved down through the valley. On the right side, she knew there was a reindeer fence. She got out, walked a few steps into the darkness. The northern lights flickered in the sky from east to west.

"You are almost home," said Jon.

She was good at making him talk. He was not as good at helping her when she needed it. He lived in his own world. It was him and the drum. It was him and the books. He had her. He knew she loved him. But did he love her? Why couldn't he be more compassionate and responsive and say what she most wanted to hear?

"I'm hungry," said Jon.

All she needed was a little more time, time without his nagging. Then she could pull herself together, be herself again.

"Aren't we going?" he asked.

Why wasn't he sensitive to her needs? He was sensitive to so many other things.

"I'm sure they are waiting for us," she heard from the other side of the car.

"Wait just a little longer." She turned toward the forest and the darkness, not toward him. He was very distant from her now. She saw before her another face. A face with a deep wrinkle across the forehead, a face with stern eyes, her father's face.



"Damn it, Lajla, let's go. I'm starved."

She tried to find a quick comeback to smooth things over. She had done it before. But she could not think of a to say. She heard him stride around the car. Then he was by her.

She had hoped he would be warm and loving. Instead, he grabbed her quickly around the waist, threw her over his shoulder and carried her to the car.

"Let me down," she yelled. But he had already let go of her.

She grabbed his hair and pulled. Even though she knew it wouldn't bother him. He was a jerk. He did not understand. He was a shit. And he ran the show.

"Damn you." She slapped him, but not hard. She didn't dare. Still, it felt good to do so.

"You are a hopeless jerk."

She jumped in the van, slammed the door behind her. He got in. She reached out to turn the key. Then he closed his hand over hers.

"What is it?" asked Jon.

"Nothing. Let's just go since you are so fucking hungry and impatient."

"What's your problem, Lajla?"

She tried to pull her hand away but he held tight.

"Cut it out. Let me start the car."

"We are not going anywhere until you get this off your chest," he said.

"You don't notice me any more. You only think about yourself. You never ask how I feel."

"At least, you can give me a clue, woman. I'm no mind reader, you know."

"You take me for granted just like the car," she said coldly, to keep her feelings under control. To get it off her chest, as he called it.

"I don't think you love me any more," she said in the same voice.

They sat there, each in their own seat, looking out the windshield. She heard him breathe but did not look at him.

"Have you forgotten how to speak?" she asked.

"I'm your husband," he finally said.

"You are talking only about yourself, as usual. What am I to you?"

Again, a pause.

"Is that all you have to say?" She put her hand on the key to start the van.

"You are my sweet little ptarmigan," he said quietly.

"No," she answered.

"With eyes like rubies," he added.

"No."

"You are my cloudberry," he continued.

"No."

"You taught me to love. That was something I never thought I would experience. You are the most important person in my life. I need you."

Lajla started the van. The dashboard instruments lit up. She turned the headlights on.

"But what's really bothering you?" asked Jon. Calmly.

"My daughter must be the best," she imitated her father. "Nothing was good enough and he never said a kind word. My daughter can do anything. She is tough as a boy. Everyone thought he was so congenial. But at home he was a bastard."

"I always wondered if you loved him as much as you said you did."

"Don't be a smart ass," snorted Lajla.

"It is okay to hate him, too, you know."

"I thought you were coming to give me a hug and you threw me in the air like a sack of potatoes. It didn't help to pull your hair either." She pinched his cheek.

"Ouch."

"Now you're going to get it."



"I don't have the energy for another argument. Weren't you the one who was in such a hurry to get home? Now we have wasted another hour and I'm starving to death. Hey, witch, can't we get this show on the road?"

"Okay, since you are being such a good boy." She was happy again. She depressed the clutch, shifted into gear and drove off.

"You are a witch."

"I know that. If I weren't a witch, I would never be able to handle you."

"Now you are in a good mood. Quick on the comebacks. I don't understand what goes on inside a woman's head," he said and shook his head.

"Perhaps you ought to try and tell me that you love me."

"I say that all the time!"

"You didn't say it earlier, though."

"Can't we just drop it?" he asked.

"You said you needed me. That's not the same."

"You can't just let it go, can you?" said Jon with a sigh.

"When I bring something up, I'm always told I'm exaggerating," she answered.

"And you always have to have the last word, you witch. I must learn to stop while I'm ahead." Jon sighed.

"Are you ever?" asked Lajla.

And so the conversation ended.

▼ ▼ ▼ ▼

LAJLA HAD EXPECTED the black cat to be the first one out the door. But it was her mother who appeared, wearing an apron over her blue-flowered, Norwegian sweater. She hugged Lajla first, then Jon.

"You have painted the house," said Jon.

"Father did it," answered Maja. "He is also going to paint the barn."

Lajla was proud of her mother. Her face was a little more wrinkled, her hands and arms a bit more lean and bony, but still, she was not completely gray.

"Mons is gone," said her mother suddenly. "He was getting old."

"And you didn't get a new one?" asked Lajla.

"You were the one who wanted a cat."

Then Tomas himself appeared at the top of the stairs. But he did not walk down—to her. She walked up—to him. When they shook hands, he seemed glad to see her.

When Jon complimented him on his painting, she recognized her father. He tried to pretend the praise wasn't necessary because it should be taken for granted that his place would always be in tip-top condition.

The sadness from her childhood began to grow inside her again.

Now he had shrunk a little, gotten smaller, older. But the ice he had inside had not melted. Coldness radiated from him. Before, she was defenseless. Before, she did not dare to feel what she felt now. Before, she had believed it was she whom there was something wrong with. She carried in the baggage and slammed the doors. She wanted to confront him.

She could hear Jon unpacking their things upstairs. He walked back and forth, probably arranging the books he had taken along on the trip. The sound seemed to carry easily through the house now, as if it had also grown more delicate and frail with age.

"The sound really travels," she said, helping her mother set the table.

"It has always been like that. Have you forgotten how your father used to bang on the floor when you kids were making noise and he wanted to nap?"

After they had eaten mutton stew, the part of the ritual that her father set in motion began, as always a little boisterous and formal. It was a game between him and Jon.

"I remembered," her father said. He brought in a bowl of cloudberry cream. "You thought I had forgotten, didn't you?"

Jon pretended to have forgotten his part. He was quite convincing, made Tomas believe he was sorry and embarrassed, did not overact. Her father's face grew tense. Her mother was also uncomfortable.

Then Jon pulled out the bottle of cognac.

Her father was responsible for serving the cloudberry cream. Her mother had, of course, both picked the berries and prepared the cream. And Jon had to bring the cognac that Lajla, of course, had bought and paid for.

Why couldn't he just ask them to bring the bottle, instead of challenging them to remember the cognac as their part of the ritual? Everything had to be turned into a competition, and the old man had to be the best.

They ate in the kitchen like they had always done. But the cognac her father wanted served in the living room. He went in there, probably to pour the alcohol into his pinchbottle. Lajla cleared the table. Her mother emptied the leftovers into a bowl, set it in the pantry. Lajla saw that she was relieved they had remembered. Jon came to get the glasses.

"We have chickens now," her mother said quietly. "And he wants to make the entire barn into a chicken coop."

"He keeps himself busy," said Jon.

"Then he wants more sheep."

"So we can expect mutton stew in the future too, then," replied Jon.

"He is hoping someone will feel obligated to take over the farm," whispered Maja to Jon.

They sat around the oval coffee table. Jon filled the glasses. Lajla knew her father would allow only two glasses per person. That made it medicine. She also knew he would make a competition out of who would be the last one to empty their glass. Her mother was the first one to empty hers. Lajla saw that her father noticed it, but he said nothing. It was not necessary to comment.

No one was allowed to refill their glass until the last one was empty. It would, of course, be his. He had won. Therefore, everyone deserved one more glass, but only one.

Now it was Tomas who filled the glasses, without spilling a drop.

"He is a strange one," she thought. She enjoyed being able to see through him. Soon he would begin to brag about his plan to buy sheep.

This time, she emptied her glass in one swallow, took the bottle and poured herself another glass. The conversation stopped. The inviting sound of the cognac being poured suddenly sounded out of place in the room.

"I got a taste for cognac," she said.

"Would you refill mine too, please?" Jon pushed his glass toward her.

He had a conspiratorial look in his eyes and she loved him for it. Her mother's cheeks grew red and her father's tightened. It was not that alcohol was bad in their house. But it was bad to break the rules. Bad or not, she was enjoying it and her heart was pounding in her chest.

Why was the air always so heavy whenever she and her father were in the same room?

She listened to Jon and her father talk about this year's salmon catch, which had been poor. Perhaps it was too late? Perhaps her

father had gotten too old? She wanted to do something to get through to him but did not know what.

Then right through the wall and into the living room came her great-grandparents. Both greeted her with a nod. Both were dressed in light clothing. Her great-grandfather had an enormous, beautiful feathered headdress on his head. Just as suddenly as they had appeared, they disappeared and the wall looked normal. It was her great-grandfather who had cleared the ground for the farm. It had always been safe to live here because he had killed Stallo. Stallo had turned into a huge stone when he died and Stallo's dog had turned into a small stone.

Lajla took this as a sign, a confirmation. She went for a walk. She could not see the river from the gate any more because the birch thicket was blocking the view. The bushes were even spreading into the fields that great-grandfather had cultivated. None of her brothers had wanted the farm. And she was not the least bit interested. Fortunately, Jon was not interested either.

The path to the river was full of memories. She came to the cove where they used to swim. Even though she did not live here any more, the stallo killer was with her.

When she returned, there was a light in the barn. Jon and her father talked in the middle of clucking chickens. It irritated her that Jon was so polite, agreeing with everything Tomas said while holding his head at an unusually attentive angle.

In the living room, the glasses were put away and the bottle gone. Her mother was joiking a hymn. Lajla felt a warm stream of energy flowing through her. She was not quite sure how to direct it.

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SHE WAS ROWING the old boat across the lake. She remembered when the boat was new. She was a young girl then. She was not allowed to use it, had to stand on the shore and watch her brothers row away. She was a little girl who had to stay behind and watch while the boys had fun.

Her father was the shadow of her childhood. Jon, sitting in the back of the boat, rocking with the rhythms of the oars, represented her father's light side.

In the middle of the lake she spun the boat in circles so she could look around. The banks seemed low. Far away, she could see how the Deadman's Island cut, like a knife's edge, up through the mirrored surface of the lake.

She pulled in the oars. They were drifting. When she was young, the water was dangerous. There was so much that was dangerous then. She stuck her hand into the cool, clear water. The water was alive. It carried the boat on its back. She and the water were tied to each other. It had helped her both to survive and to leave. Leave this place that had so few challenges. So little to reach for. And that was so confining. Everyone here was either being oppressed or being the oppressor.

But the water was much more powerful than she was. It was more centered. On this beautiful autumn day, however, she felt a greater harmony between them. The water gave her power. She felt it flowing through her. It was not dangerous. It also absorbed the irritation she had felt toward Jon yesterday when he nodded to please her father.

In that moment, she felt free. She was Lajla. She liked that name, liked the way it sounded. Three of the five letters were vowels, or so it was pronounced.

Are you coming now, are you coming,  
the clear water sings.

As she began to row again, the intense energy transformed into physical strength. She enjoyed putting strength behind her strokes. She rowed the heavy, waterlogged boat toward the shore until her arms felt like lead. When the boat reached the beach, she was dripping with sweat.

She was the one who wanted to visit the gamme. Jon came along to be nice. He would just as soon have stayed with the old folks. It would have been easier because he wanted to leave as soon as possible. Back to Saanen and to the little house. If he ever got a second chance, he would take the drum.

But he had to go with her, at least for one night. When she packed the knapsack, she took three loaves of bread, a carton of eggs and other food to last several days. He was crabby. He had nothing to say to her. Now he was far away from both Abraha and the drum. Even the sunshine irritated him. The fact that Lajla was spinning the boat around and around to show how good she was feeling did little to improve his mood.

When he opened the door to the gamme, the dampness that had been trapped inside overwhelmed him. It was wet and cold in there. On one of the poles by the window grew green mold. She lit the birch bark kindling that lay ready in the stove. Then Lajla held out the ax.

"Go and find a dry pine."

"Do it yourself," he answered.

"Get going," she repeated.

"I want to stay here and warm up by the fire."

"Can't you see that we don't have any wood and it will be cold tonight?"

The ax head was cold and the handle slick.

He walked through heather and dead pine needles, between tall golden tree trunks. What he saw did not excite him. His feet did not fit the terrain either.

Jon came to an opening in a canyon. There, a small stream trickled through. He walked up along it. The canyon was unfamiliar to him. Then he noticed the windfall, a big, hollow, dry pine with one end hanging out over a steep slope. He walked toward it but slipped on a branch and lost his balance. Jon fell forward, landed between some stones. The water in the stream looked red as blood. During the next few seconds as he lay there making sure he was still in one piece, the hollow tree trunk seemed to move toward him. He looked straight into the tunnel and at the other end he saw a face he recognized.

"You were thinking about something you shouldn't have and now you have a visitor," said a familiar voice as Jon was being sucked into the tunnel.

Jon grabbed the ax handle, pointed the steel toward the danger and was free.

It was night. He was lying on one of the beds in the gamme. The stove door was open and the embers were whistling. Lajla joiked in the half-light. Again, he became something lighter than air, something that left the body.

A reindeer bull was looking at him with bright, yellow eyes. He landed on its back. The fur was black, the horns huge. He held onto the horn as the reindeer trotted away. After a while, the speed increased. He almost fell off.

"Jump into my ear," said the reindeer bull.

He did so and sat safe and protected.

"Where are we going?" he asked into the ear of the reindeer.

"Wait and see."

The reindeer ran toward the top of a mountain. When it reached the peak, it began to fly up through the air, higher and higher. They



passed a big tree and continued toward the sun. Jon became aware of a large, white reindeer that carried the sun in its horns. Suddenly, it spoke to him.

"I have called on you," the Sun Carrier said.

He could no longer hear Lajla's joik but when she stopped he knew immediately.

He fell down from a great height, landed on a mountain. Then the joik continued. Before him, on the mountain, he could vaguely make out a fire and the faces of four women in the flickering light of the flames. Jon walked and walked toward the four around the fire, but the distance did not seem to diminish. Then the joik came to an end. No matter how much he wanted to be with the flying reindeer and the Sun Carrier and the women on the mountain, he landed on the bunk, filled with awe but also disappointed.

Lajla had never heard this joik before.

The joik had almost joiked itself. While this was happening, four women came to her. They began to joik with her. Then the stallo killer appeared. He was no longer an Indian but was dressed in a Norwegian sweater.

When she stopped joiking, they continued and it sounded just as clear as if she were doing it herself.

This gave her time to look at them. They came from different places. She could tell by their costumes. The woman from the South had pewter thread embroidery on her neckerchief and belt. The woman from the West wore a horn hat on her head. She was Jon's ancestress. Because he was inside her in this joik-vision.

"My name is Isir," she said.

How happy they were. The happiest of all was the stallo killer. In a dance, he showed them how he had wrestled Stallo. Stallo was sly, used every imaginable dirty trick, but in the end he was able to kill him.

After a while, they stopped joiking. They waved farewell and departed. A large black cat jumped up into her lap. It lay down there, began to purr. The cat gazed up at her lazily with its green eyes. Then it licked her hand with a small rough and red tongue.

When Jon sat up, the cat vanished into her belly.

They were sitting facing each other on the floor in front of the stove, holding hands.

"I met your ancestress. Her name is Isir," Lajla told him. "She wore a hat that looked like a horn."

"Where did she come from?"

"From the West. She was accompanied by three others. They joiked with me."

"I thought it was you who joiked."

"I started. Then I stopped."

"And then you started up again?" asked Jon.

"They did. They continued the singing."

"I saw the four women as they sat on a mountain and joiked me almost all the way to them."

"The stallo killer was also there. Did you see him?"

Jon shook his head.

"Now I've had a visitor twice, the night we got lost and again today," said Jon.

"Stallo uses dirty tricks. The stallo killer showed me that."

"I must learn how to defend myself."

They went to bed. A cat had jumped inside her and now she felt like an affectionate feline. She rubbed herself against the familiar body, kissed him hard on the neck that she loved. She went crazy over his neck. She never got enough of it, always needing to sniff it some more. She became dizzy with her own feelings. She had found her feminine power and needed to meet her man, meet his chest, his arms, his lips. She needed the firmness of his grip and the energy that was flowing through her to hold her on the path till everything was safe again.

During the night, she had a dream. They were together forever. They lived inside a giant spider. They were completely safe. From the raw material of Dreamtime, they spun the tribal web of fate.

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"I USED TO find them repulsive when I was young. They would lower themselves from nowhere and land on my face. I was afraid there were going to be spiders on my pillow when I went to bed."

"And now you have landed inside one?"

"We have," she said.

"But wasn't it a bit crowded for both of us in there?" asked Jon.

"We were naked, small and fully developed. Everything was perfect. We were protected as if in the mother's womb. The threads we spun tied all people together," Lajla told him.

"I also had a dream. I came to a stone that radiated light. The dream resembled the one I had when I found the knife. That was also by a stone. Do you remember? It was as if the entire tundra made up the sheath. I pulled it up from the moss and stood with the tribal knife in my hand."

"Your dream came true then."

"Yes."

"Do you know where this stone is?"

"No, but I would love to talk with its spirit."

"Where do you keep the old knife?"

"It's lying in my bag, among the books."

"There is a fine reindeer carved on the sheath."

"I think the bear head and the paws are the most beautiful," said Jon.

"There is something strange about the feather. One feather."

"Yes," answered Jon.

"I wonder what the person who made the knife had in mind?" she responded.

"I don't know."

"It was a fine gift Lasse gave you that time."

"Yes, I was afraid I would never get it, that he would give it to someone else. However, he had promised me the knife, but not until he retired. At that time, there was still another year before he was eligible for his pension. I worried the whole year. Because I had recognized the knife. It was the one from my dream. I was afraid he would forget his promise. Perhaps he would give it to someone else or even worse, sell it."

"But you got it."

"Yes, there was no reason to worry."

"He knew what he was doing," said Lajla.

"Have I ever told you how the knife came to him?"

"No," replied Lajla.

"He once did an assignment for a museum down south. It was then he came across the knife. It jumped into his hand, just like the stone you found."

"Did they give it to him?"

"He took it. And he was a clever man. He went into the archive, found the registration card and burned it. The knife was made by my great-grandfather."

The hollow tree trunk appeared to be like any old tree trunk and the stream was running like any old stream. It was as if the dream about the stone had led the way, opened the door to this canyon.

This time his feet fit the terrain. The pine trees were standing with straight trunks, reaching tall across the ridge above the canyon. This was bear country. He could smell it. It was not far to Anarjohka from here. That's where the bears lived. But they would roam down into the forest and canyons on this side of the lake. He walked quietly ahead, alert and on the lookout.

He had seen the Mosegubbe once before.

Jon had crossed a swamp and was lying under the birch thicket on a hillside, watching. The Mosegubbe had walked across the swamp. The Mosegubbe had stopped when he came across his tracks. The Mosegubbe had stood on its hind legs, sniffed and

sniffed in his direction. Suddenly, the Mosegubbe changed his shape. He had become enormous, had filled the entire swamp and the wide canyon and had grown even larger till everything was lying under his paws. Finally, the Mosegubbe went down on all fours and lumbered away. Then Jon had felt the power and had understood.

Whenever he encountered it later, he recognized the power from those paws.

He heard the sound of breaking sticks in the bushes. Jon ducked down behind a stone. Something emerged from the birch forest at a dead run. A moose crossed the canyon, its muzzle extended forward and the brown antlers reaching wide and broad over its head. The huge body galloped forward on long legs, elegant and amazingly quiet. In a flash, he was up over the hillside and disappeared out of sight.

He had really thought it was the Mosegubbe himself. His skin was warm, warm with the sudden release of excitement.

Jon noticed three stones that protruded from the moss. They seemed to be arranged in a pattern. He discovered more stones. They all made a circle around the stone where he had been hiding. Then he felt his chest contract.

This was the stone from his dream.

It was an old stone, a sieidi. It sat right next to the path, between two ponds. A circle of smaller stones surrounded it. Jon smelled the stone, inhaled the odors of moss, granite and damp soil.

A white stripe of a lighter type of stone ran diagonally through the entire sieidi, a belt of milky-white quartz crystals. Some places, the gray stone had washed away and the harder crystals protruded, clear as ice. They caught his eye. Quartz crystals were among the finest gifts one could give to a sieidi. They were rarer and more precious than silver.

Suddenly, one of the crystals opened up, took him inside, into an incredibly clear light. It took awhile before his eyes got used to the light. He slowly made out a landscape around him. Then came

an eagle, grabbed him by the scruff of his neck with its beak, lifted him up on a mountain. There a man was sitting. Around his neck hung a crystal necklace. The man's name was Myrinn. Suddenly, Myrinn brought out a crystal knife. With a long incision, he cut Jon's chest and abdomen open, without Jon feeling any pain.

"I am a mineral master," said Myrinn. "We are all crystals. Even the blood consists of crystals. The cartilage and bones are crystals," he said.

"This will give you a protected shield. You will need it. You are in danger."

Then Myrinn rubbed his hand over the wound. It closed up and his body was as whole as before, but it felt different.

"You know that by helping others you help yourself."

"Yes," answered Jon.

"I will send you a helper, for you are one who will heal souls," concluded Myrinn.

Then the eagle returned, picked him up in its beak once more, and flew with him out of the stone.

Jon walked down to the gamme. He turned and looked back toward the place. The stone stood in silhouette against the sky. It resembled a dancing bear with its head thrown back, wild, alert and beautiful. The luminous vein of crystals ran like a white noaide-band across its chest.

In the evening, they rowed out and set a net in the cove by Deadman's Island. The air was chilly on the water and Lajla was cold. She made a blazing fire back at the gamme and fried eggs.

After they ate, Jon lay down on the bunk. Lajla began to joik. She tried to remember the joik from the previous night. It was gone. And Jon fell asleep. Finally, she followed him to bed, tossed and turned on the narrow bunk before she, at last, was able to sleep.

Jon woke her. It was early and she was tired. He did not want to take time to light a fire, make coffee. They could wait till they got back to the house. They packed their things, said goodbye.

A thin layer of ice had formed around the grass and plants along the shore. It crunched when they set the boat on the water.

She thought Jon was clumsy the way he pulled the net up.

On the fish cleaning spot by the shore, they prepared the fish. She was still tired. It felt good to do something physical, like cleaning fish and washing off the blood. But the water that had been so friendly yesterday was cold and pulled the heat out of her. When they walked home, she felt chilled.

"You need to re-color your hair with henna soon," he said behind her.

"Why?"

"The blond is showing at the roots."

She wasn't even good enough for him. Damn. Her body was stiff, the frame of the knapsack rubbed against her back and her hair was greasy.

He passed her on the path, was in a hurry. She had the feeling he was planning to leave as soon as possible.





*A child's fur boots.*

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SHE WENT STRAIGHT to the bathroom. She wanted a warm shower, get the chill out of her body.

When she grew up, she had thought their shower was comfortable. Now it looked old-fashioned with the small water pipe running all the way to the ceiling before it curved. Back then, the walls were painted red. Now the room was light blue except for the wall by the door where the large mirror stood. There the wall was still red, like a frame from the past surrounding the mirror.

The concrete floor was cold under her bare feet. She turned the water on. It was also cold. Finally, the hot water came. It was impossible to get inside the spray of warm water with her whole body because the large shower-head, high up there, did not spread the water any better than a tin can with holes in it.

There was a knock on the door.

"It's me," said Jon and entered. He also undressed, wanted to shower.

"There is room for only one at a time." She massaged her hair with orange-scented shampoo.

"I can watch," he replied.

The room gradually warmed up, filled with orange fragrance and steam. Steam fogged the large mirror by the door.

Then he joined her under the water, put his arms around her and pushed her to the side.

"Okay, let me just get myself wet so I can soap up," he said.

She walked out of the shower to the mirror and wiped the steam off. Here she had watched herself become a woman fifteen years ago. She was still slender. Her right breast was larger than her left one, but just a little. Her blond pubic hair was almost invisible now that it was wet. She could also see the light hair by the scalp. She'd better do a henna treatment soon.

"You are so sexy and wet," he said, rubbed his hand across her stomach and down toward her groin. She could feel he was getting an erection. In that moment, it bothered her. She pushed him away.

He grabbed her again, pulled her toward him. Before, she had loved his game. But now it was not so. He tried to turn her around to enter her from behind. Then she got angry. With agility and strength she did not know she possessed, she pulled away. She snarled at him, pushed him away with unknown intensity. But it felt good. He grabbed for her again.

"That's it. Stop it!" she screamed. Her voice reverberated above the sound of the splashing water. He was still smiling, his hair plastered to his head, as if he had not understood. He was into his role as the reindeer bull like a monomaniac. She hit him with an open hand, hard.

"Ouch," he said but did not stop, grabbed her. Then she clawed him across the chest like a furious cat.

Jon let her go. Her anger vanished. Her eyes met his. She had expected them to be like small black pinheads. But his look was almost curious. She stood in the corner by the mirror, took a step forward, relaxed. She began to laugh. There he stood, naked, wet, with his hair plastered to his head and with shampoo down his stomach and a semi-stiff penis. And across his chest he had four red marks from her claws.

He dried her stomach.

"Does it sting?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Did you get angry?"

"Yes."

"It didn't show."

"I controlled myself. It was interesting."

"Interesting?" She turned around and he dried her back.

"I get so horny when we are here."

"I have noticed."

"Perhaps I feel I have to compete with the old man."

"How?"

"It's like I need to prove to both him and her that you are mine."

He bent down and dried her thighs and her calves. Then he dried her ptarmigan feet and took special care to get between the toes. He knew she enjoyed it. He was asking for forgiveness.

"You can say a lot about our relationship, but you can't say it is ever boring." Jon began to dry himself off.

"And we haven't even eaten breakfast yet," replied Lajla.

It smelled like fresh fried fish in the kitchen. Her mother came with the frying pan. On one side lay whitefish, white meat and lots of bones. On the other side, trout. The meat had separated from the bones like they usually do when one fries fish.

Tomas told them he would catch a barrel full when he set a net. At least... There were plenty of fish if you knew where to find them.

"These were taken by Deadman's Island," said Jon.

"Last time I was there I caught forty."

"Good for you," replied Jon.

"Mostly trout. The smallest about the size of this one." Tomas helped himself to one of the bigger ones.

Jon understood the signals, did not want to enter into another competition with his father-in-law.

"How did the island get its name?" asked Jon.

"It's really nothing we should be discussing," Tomas answered.

"The name comes from an old episode," said his mother-in-law.

"Maja," said the old man sharply. The small woman looked down for a moment, then she looked Jon straight in the eyes.

"In the old days, people lived further up this canyon. One of them was named Matis. They called him Mirko. He had a small farm, and he gradually acquired reindeer. It was said he had power over spirits."

"He had sold his soul to Satan." Tomas got up from the table, as if he were going outside.

"Well...", she hesitated.

"Satan came and got him in the end," interrupted Tomas.

"Mirko became prosperous. His reindeer herd grew and grew," Maja told them.

"The rumor had it that the neighbor's herd decreased accordingly," continued Tomas.

"The neighbor had heard that Mirko had a bottle and in this bottle was a spirit that could make all wishes come true. He wanted to get hold of this bottle," continued Maja.

"One time when Mirko was in the mountains and his wife and children were away, the neighbor broke into his house. He did not find the bottle inside. So he broke into the storehouse and the bottle fell down and broke. The spirit flew out.

"When this happened, Mirko suddenly felt that something was not right. He caught his fastest-pulling reindeer and hooked it to the sled and headed down toward the church."

"He had pawned his soul to Satan." The old man was still standing by the table.

"Mirko believed that if he got as far as to where he could see the church spire, he would be saved. The church spire could be seen from the lower end of the lake. He drove as fast as the reindeer could run. But the spirit flew through the air and caught up with him just as Mirko came down on the ice on the lake."

"This was the day when Satan claimed what was his and this should not be joked about," said Tomas.

"Sit down and don't interrupt," said Lajla suddenly.

"One ought not repeat these stories." Tomas was getting excited.

"If you don't want to listen, go outside," answered Lajla.

"It awakens the devil." Tomas' face was tense.

Maja's cheeks turned red, but she continued.

"When Mirko reached the small island, the spirit threw himself at him. It pulled him out of the sled."

"Matis kaput. Finished," said Tomas.

"The spirit tore the clothes off the man and ripped his body to pieces. The pieces were scattered in the snow. His intestines hung in the trees. And later the trees died and nothing has grown there since." Maja finished the story.

"Now his soul is burning in Hell and that is the truth."

The old man sat down.

"We should be happy that the superstition is buried and gone with the heathenistic past," he added. "In those days they even believed that stones could talk and help with all sorts of things. But offerings had to be made to the stones. The more offerings were made, the more the stone demanded. They would sacrifice both reindeer and horses, and silver and gold until they were completely ruined. Once they had begun, they had to continue; otherwise, the underworld would turn against them. Even children were sacrificed."

"No, father, now you're fantasizing," Lajla interrupted.

"That's how the stories go."

"He is fantasizing," added Maja hastily.

"I myself have seen reindeer steaks, fish and silver buttons by various stones. Somebody ought to go and take all the money that is lying by stones on the tundra. You could get rich."

"It's shameful to talk like that," responded Maja quietly.

"We, who know better, should go and take the money. What must others think of us? That we worship stones? There is a stone above the gamme, up by the pass."

"The one in the stone circle?" asked Jon.

"I went there once to knock the stone over. But it was anchored in the ground. So I was unable to do anything. I would like to tear all the sieidis down."

"Was there money by the stone?"

"No," replied the old man sternly.

"Have you ever heard of anyone finding quartz crystals?" asked Jon.

"No," he responded curtly.

"Of course," said Maja.



"Our ancestors were much more in tune with nature. They found gold in the river and silver in the mountain. They also found crystals. I have heard they found magnets and many other things. But they were helped by the Elf People, the underworld," she continued.

"I have heard stories about people who would ask the underworld's permission before they began to build their house," said Jon.

"You had to do that. You could not build on top of their dwellings. If you built a dairy barn above them, the cows could defecate on top of their heads and that they wouldn't put up with. So they began to torment the cows and the people, making their lives miserable," replied Maja.

"All they ever did was torment people," interrupted Tomas.

"They have never bothered us," answered Maja.

"We have always been protected here on this farm. Even back in the days when someone could cast the evil eye on you."

"They would turn the cows' feet around so they'd face the opposite direction if things didn't go their way," said Tomas.

"That has never happened here and people have lived here for six generations."

"It certainly looks like we are the last one," said Tomas. He got up from the table and went outside.

Jon knew their beliefs. Still, he was surprised how deeply the devil-scare was rooted in Tomas. It was too late to change him. He was always on the defensive. The first time Jon had challenged him had almost ended in a fist fight. There was no hope for the old Finlander. Like so many of them, he was crazy about land. He was a Finnish land slave and had adopted the Lapp language like a lot of other Finnish immigrants. But the large nose and the tall, thin body spoke for themselves, along with his temper. Lajla was created in her mother's image. But she had two brothers who were true copies of their father. Both were influential Sami politicians and were extremely materialistic. Even Lajla had little to talk to them about.

Then Tomas returned to the kitchen. In his hand he had a small pouch made of tanned reindeer hide.

"I want to show you something," he told Jon. "It wasn't just our ancestors who found precious things in nature."

Tomas opened the pouch and took out something wrapped in a piece of red cloth.

"Look here." He held up a stone about the size of a finger. It was strangely translucent, like an icicle in the April sun.

"A quartz crystal," said Jon.

"I found it," said Tomas.

"Where?" asked Lajla.

"Out in nature."

A light suddenly radiated from the crystal. Out of this light came Myrinn, flew through the room and disappeared.

"You have never showed me this one before," said Maja.

"You always tell me I have no understanding for this kind of thing."

"Where did you find it, Father?" repeated Lajla.

"I found it in nature and since you believe in stones, I will give it to you," said Tomas. "Do you dare take it?" he asked defiantly, held the crystal in front of Jon.

"With pleasure."

"Did you find it here on the property, Father?" Lajla was getting impatient.

"It doesn't matter," answered the loving father as he stood there with the leather pouch, the cloth and the crystal in his hand. "I'm glad to get it out of my possession."

"Why?" asked Jon.

"I tried once to throw it away."

"Why?"

"Because it causes uneasiness," responded Tomas and continued his story. "But the next day it was here as if it had somehow flown back. I'll give it to you on one condition," said Tomas.



"Which is?"

"That you take it with you when you leave," said Tomas and handed the things over to Jon.

"I promise, but on one condition," replied Jon as he received the gift.

"Certainly. What is it?"

"You must answer one question."

The old man was back to his old self. He had balanced the situation. He victoriously held out his chin.

"It is a simple yes or no question and you have to promise to answer," said Jon.

"Fire away," he said. He was feeling good now.

"Did you find this crystal by the sieidi inside the stone circle?"

Tomas' chin dropped and his good mood was swept away. He blinked, looked at Jon. He looked at the other two. All three stared back at him.

Then Tomas nodded.

"I dug out several others there. They were much bigger. Those I threw out into the lake."

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WHEN HE WOKE up in the gamme that morning, he had decided to leave. And alone. Several times, he had made up his mind. But he was not able to tell her. The unexpected events during breakfast had thrown his plans off. Now it was already afternoon.

Lajla was sitting with both hands around the coffee cup on the other side of the table. She would probably put up a fight if he knew her right.

Jon went to get a second cup of coffee at the counter of the local cafe. He ended up waiting in line behind a group of high school students. Loud, laughing and dawdling, they picked out cakes, cola and tea, constantly changing their minds about what they wanted to drink. It took forever before they were done. If that wasn't enough, they also occupied both the table in front of and behind where he and Lajla were sitting. The kids at the two tables were talking with each other about an impossible teacher, back and forth above their heads. Even though the noise irritated him, he could not help but sympathize with the poor man who had to use his time and energy to try and teach this gang mathematics. Jon emptied his second cup of coffee, readied himself to say what he had to say.

"Lajla, is that you?" a voice was questioning. Both he and Lajla turned toward the sound.

Lajla got up. In a few quick steps she was next to the woman who came walking toward them, and they embraced.

"I hardly recognized you with black hair."

"Well, it's me."

The two women hugged each other with delightful giggles that overpowered the high school students' chatter. Everyone looked at them and Jon felt embarrassed.

"I sat and looked at you. There was something familiar but I couldn't think of who you were. Then I saw the way you held the cup. It could only be you."

She went and got her coffee and sat down at their table.

"Are you living here now?" asked this woman who was unfamiliar to him.

"I'm on fall vacation. And you?"

"I'm attending a seminar," she replied.

"Do you remember..." they both said at the same time and burst out laughing.

"We attended the same boarding school," Lajla explained and introduced Johanne. Johanne majored in industrial arts. Jon had never seen her before and he had thought he knew everyone.

"Is this your husband?" asked Johanne.

Lajla nodded.

"Now, tell me how you are doing with the camera. Are you still taking photographs?"

Lajla nodded.

Then a man came over. He stood by the table, listened to the conversation.

"That's what I do for a living," said Lajla. "But I don't have the camera with me. I'm taking a vacation from the pictures, the magazines and the photo agencies."

"And what does your husband do?" asked Johanne.

"Nothing important. He wants to be a noaide."

Johanne smiled and looked at the man who was still standing there.

"This is Paul," said Johanne.

Paul gave Jon a limp handshake when he introduced himself. It was the kind of handshake that gave Jon goose bumps. Paul took his coffee cup, remained standing while drinking.

"Are you both taking this seminar?" asked Lajla.

Johanne nodded for both of them. It felt like Paul was thinking about something else.

"Wish you could see what I'm making," said Johanne.

"What is it?"

"A drum."

"A noiade drum?" asked Lajla.

"I'm trying to copy one I once saw," nodded Johanne.

"In a museum?"

"So many unexpected things are happening while I'm working on it."

"Like what?"

"I received a grant to travel around and visit museums that exhibit artifacts."

"That's great."

Paul stood by the table drinking his coffee. He looked away as if the people at the table didn't exist or as if what they talked about wasn't worth listening to.

"Why don't you sit down?" Jon asked Paul.

"We must go soon," he answered.

"We still have fifteen minutes." Johanne looked at her watch.

Paul remained standing by the table as if he had no interest in sitting or carrying the conversation any further.

"Where did you see the drum?" repeated Lajla.

"Don't you know that he who stands while drinking his coffee will become jealous and end up in a fight?" said Johanne.

Then, finally, her standing husband went to find a chair.

"Well, where?"

"You are still interested in the old ways, aren't you?" responded Johanne.

Lajla nodded.

"During our last year at the boarding school, I met an old man. It soon became clear that he knew more than the Lord's Prayer. He had a drum. I saw it several times. It was really old. People used to come to him for counseling. Anyway, no one talked about it. Everything was kept secret then."

"Was it a shamanic drum?" asked Lajla.

"Yes."

"Where is it now?"

Paul had found an empty chair, sat down next to her.

"No one knows, do they, Paul?" said Johanne.

"The man died," answered Paul as if he did not want to discuss it.

"The drum vanished. What's why I'm making a new one," said Johanne.

"The man died in a car accident. His head was crushed," she added.

Paul looked away.

"I just saw a drum in a house down by the coast. It was very old," said Jon.

He had intended to tell them more, but as he looked up, his eyes met Paul's. Jon shivered. A torch began to flicker inside him. Perhaps Paul was a jealous devil who was afraid for his girl. Johanne was a good-looking woman with a sparkle in her eyes, the total opposite of this mute oyster. Perhaps he thought Jon said this to impress her? Therefore, he cut his story short. Lajla was also quiet for a change.

Jon sensed that Paul was thinking about something he did not say. It was like he tried to stop the conversation through his silence. Perhaps he was one of those who did not like to talk about shamans and drums.

"When I get back home, I'll stretch the skin on the one I'm making. I'm both excited and nervous about drawing the figures on the drum-skin," said Johanne.

"How come?"

"I cannot remember them all. It was dumb of me not to copy them down. You probably would have done that?"

"I would have taken photographs."

"Of course."

"But you certainly remember some of them?"

"What I remember best is the sign of the Sun God and that the skin was divided in three areas. What the other symbols looked like, I can't recall very well. I don't have any idea what they meant either. Not many people do remember these days."

Jon was interested in learning more about the drum but he did not ask. The torch flickered inside him. He did not want to challenge Paul. That might be just as bad as when he challenged Tomas the first time. It grew quiet around the table. Jon heard the high school students chatting. Paul glanced at his watch.

"We'd better go." Johanne stood up.

"Can't you come and visit me at home? I'm staying at my parents' house. Then we can talk some more," suggested Lajla.

"Great," answered Johanne. "Then we can sit together into the night and drink tea and warm our hands on our cups. Do you remember the nights we used to do that?" she asked.

Lajla nodded.

"Would both of you come?"

"Yes." Now both she and Paul were standing. Johanne and Lajla hugged goodbye. Jon said goodbye. From Paul, there was not a sound, even though his lips moved a little.

They drove home.

"You leave tomorrow, I suppose," said Lajla as she looked at herself in the mirror and ran her hand through her long hair.

"You're right."

"To Abraha?"

"The first stop is Kautokeino where you didn't want to stop. I will look for the house."

"And then?"

"One step at a time till I reach my goal."

"Do you ever doubt you can find that drum?"

"Honestly, I feel I will be guided to the right place. And learn what I need to on the way."

"Since you don't want me to come along, perhaps I need to look at it in the same way. I'll stay home, the place where I can learn the most."

"Your home is not here any more. Your home is with me. Besides, who said you are not coming?"

"You have wanted to tell me this all day. Only you haven't been able to spit it out," said Lajla. Charming as ever.

When they were approaching the farm, Jon asked, "Do you think Paul is jealous?"

"Hardly," replied Lajla.

"He knew something, but he didn't want to talk about it."

"He is being cautious."

"His handshake gave me goose bumps."

"You know, Jon, if I didn't know you, I would consider you an arrogant son of a bitch. You have radiated skepticism all day. You have had as many quills up as a threatened porcupine."

Lajla told them Jon would be visiting a relative and be gone for a few days. She would stay there. Tomas went and got a carton of eggs, guaranteed freshly laid by his gold division hens, for Jon to take along. Maja smiled one of her tired smiles. Then the old folks went to bed.

Car lights approached in the dark. The car drove through the gate, stopped outside.

It was Johanne and Paul.

"We had a discussion afterwards," said Johanne.

"I thought the talk about you wanting to be a noiade sounded peculiar," explained Paul.

"Why?" asked Jon.

"Nothing important, just a noiade," imitated Paul.

"But that's the way we usually talk, isn't it, Lajla?" asked Johanne.

Lajla nodded.

"See, Paul. It was a flippant remark." Johanne looked at Paul.

Now Jon felt more than a chill. He was about to lose his temper. Paul was obviously one who could not even tolerate the word *noiade* being spoken.

"I promised you tea," said Lajla. Johanne nodded.

After the tea was served and all four of them were sitting around the table, Paul spoke: "I have never believed that the drum was burned like his relative claimed had happened. Neither Johanne nor I could believe that story."

"No, we figured they said it to keep the drum for themselves. So that they didn't have to give it up to a museum or something."

"It wasn't a regular car accident either," said Paul.

"We can't be certain about that," responded Johanne.

"I am. I do not believe the old man stole a car and drove it off the road. And got his head crushed in the process."

"When did this happen?" asked Jon.

"About a year ago."

"And where?"

"A few miles on this side of the border."

"I have heard there were more people in the car. He wasn't alone, although that's what the police were told," said Paul.

"Perhaps it wasn't an accident?"

Paul nodded. "It wasn't an accident. And the drum was not burned."

"Do you think this could be the same drum that I saw?"

"We don't know. By the way, the dead man's name was Jon," replied Johanne.

Lajla and Jon lay in the dark in the small bedroom.

"Would anyone commit such a crime just to get a drum?" asked Jon.

"You saw the man yourself. Do you still believe he is only a fox?"

"That's how he appeared to me. Perhaps he is one who can shift shape."



"Evil he is," said Lajla.

"Do you believe he could have been capable of doing it?"

"Yes. Don't you?"

"I'll think about it."

"No, you need to act as if he did it and to keep in mind that he can do the same thing again," she said.

A chill went through his body.

"Yes," answered Jon.

"I've felt danger ever since the night we got lost. Too much happened that night. It was not a coincidence. In the past, the drum was used to send both accidents and bad weather. I believe he is behind all the devilry," said Lajla.

"I have also thought about that."

Jon felt sleep filling his body and creeping into his deepest consciousness where the chill from earlier that day had grabbed hold.

"We forgot to do something," she said suddenly.

"What?"

"We forgot to report the poaching."

"That's right. I'll remember it when I come back."

"Paul was really hiding something," said Lajla.

"Didn't I tell you?"

"Yes." Lajla kissed him on the neck.

Finally, she acknowledged his intuition. A warm feeling ate the cold chill. Long, soothing waves of sleep rushed through him and swept him away.

"Why did you tell them I was visiting relatives?" he asked.

"The words just fell from my mouth," she answered with her face buried in the pillow.

"I don't even have any relatives that I visit."

"You really ought to go and see the only one you have."

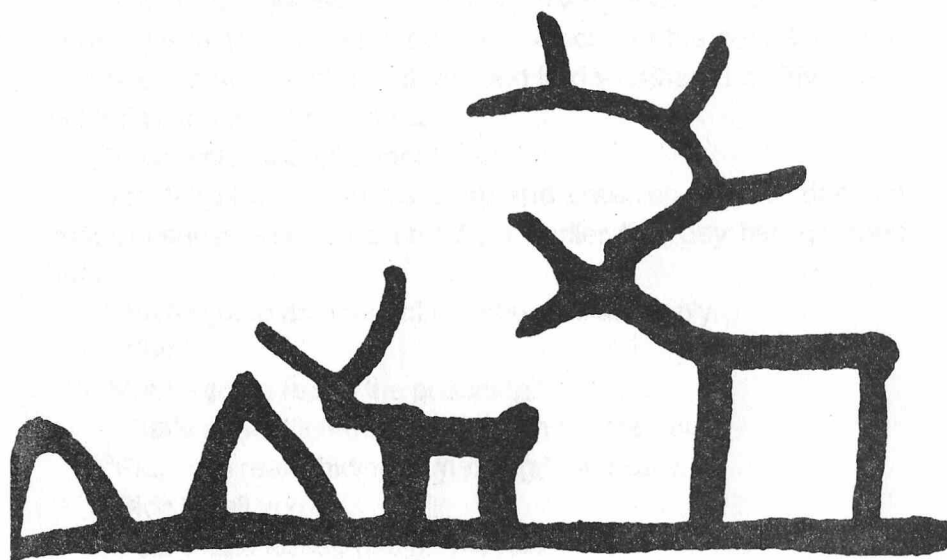
"Because you told him I was visiting relatives, he brought out the carton of his gold division eggs."

"Yes."

"Now I have to travel around with a dozen eggs."

"So what?" asked Lajla from deep down in the pillow.

He lay there and thought about a good comeback to her remark. But finally, he gave up. Lajla had long fallen asleep anyway.



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"WHY ARE YOU doing this, Jon? Why do you have to pursue this?" asked Lajla the next morning.

"Because of the dreams I've had."

"Isn't there something more than the dreams?"

"To free the drum from the grip."

"From the amputated hand?"

"No, from the grip of black sorcery."

"That could be dangerous."

"I'm doing it to bring back the old wisdom. Not just for myself or for the tribe."

"I see," she answered.

"The wisdom is a gift to everyone. The more you share, the more there is to be shared."

Jon climbed into the van, started it up.

"He is an evil man. But she is good. I like her. She'll help you if you need it." That was the last thing Lajla said before he left.

Jon was on his way again. He sang. The torch burned with a strong, clear flame inside his belly. Myrinn had dropped a crystal in his hand. Now it lay in the leather pouch on the dashboard.

But the eggs he had forgotten.

Jon slowed down before a sharp curve. The curve was a trap in the small road and he had great respect for it. A while later, he met a car. The man behind the steering wheel waved at him but Jon could not tell who it was.

Jon felt an enormous strength as he drove into the village. He stopped by the kiosk, bought a diet cola, opened it and drank.

"Hi, Jon. Come over here," called a voice from another car. An arm waved him over. Jon walked to the vehicle.

"Hi. Is it you, Anders?" said Jon.

"Yes. How is it going?"

"Not bad," answered Jon.

"Is anything new happening?" asked Anders.

"Of course."

"Anything sensational?"

"Well..."

"You've still got the old camper, I see." Anders pointed toward Jon's van.

"And you have changed vehicles."

"I change every year. It's good business," said Anders.

"I suppose."

"You probably make a decent salary. You can make a few hundred dollars on a single magazine article, can't you?"

There was another person sitting in the seat next to Anders. He leaned forward.

"I have a story for you," he said.

He began to tell about a road that was being proposed across prime reindeer grazing ground. They had fought it but the road was coming anyway.

"They would like to read about it down south," he concluded.

"I'm not so sure about that."

"Of course. Look how much they wrote during the Alta case."

"The quota was used up then," said Jon

"You're wrong."

"Were you at Alta? Did you try to stop the construction of the dam?" asked Jon.

"No, are you crazy?"

"No, I just wanted to know."

"It's a waste of time to protest against the State. Everything turned out the way I predicted," replied the person in the passenger seat.

"Why don't you write a steamy, hot sex story set in the mountains instead?" said Anders with a grin.

"Write about animals and humans in heat. We are waiting for that. Explicit sex on a reindeer hide in the lavvo. You don't need to reveal the names of the girls."

"You would like to read that, I bet," commented Jon.

"You'd better believe it. I'd have to read it to find out who you were writing about." Anders started the car and took off in a cloud of dust and gravel.

Seven miles outside the village, Jon passed an old summer dairy. The old buildings rested between small pines on a point by the river. On the right side of the road were the cabins. A few sheep were resting alongside one of the cabin walls.

He was close to the power. The energy stimulated his glands and he felt warm. The great tribal picture had significance for everyone. It encompassed people from before birth to beyond death. The first step on the path to the wisdom was to know the openings.

Suddenly, a heavy shadow lay across the road. Jon slammed on the brakes. But the tires lost their grip on the asphalt. It felt like the killer threw the van, like a piece of debris, toward an opening between the boulders and the cliff.

A light exploded around him. The light fought off the killer and the brakes took hold.

The vehicle came to a halt at the edge of the cliff. Just beyond where he had stopped, the earth plummeted. Through the side window, Jon could look down at the rocky slope ten or fifteen meters below. The stones down there reminded him of a row of snapping teeth. Jon breathed deeply and calmly, in and out, in and out. Then the nightmarish vision disappeared. The stones lost their spell on him. He must not forget to breathe, he thought, shifted the van into reverse, backed up on the asphalt.

Jon parked on the safe side of the road. It had been a close call. The rays of the sun radiated through the windshield. They

created a rainbow of light around the crystal. He touched it. It burned against his skin. He pulled his hand back.

The tundra seemed endlessly wide and empty, without sharp contours, without boundaries, without life. His own life energy was being sucked out of him. Did this journey have a purpose any more? In the old days, it was said that when a journey began with misfortune, so it would continue in catastrophe. Perhaps he should turn around? He felt tense behind the steering wheel, lost contact with the car.

The sun went down.

The evening came, cold and clear, almost without notice. Jon was cold, turned the heater up. He was woven into the web of fate that Lajla had talked about. Now it was tightening around him.

One learns fast when one is frightened, he remembered someone had told him.

Jon found the road up to the house where, many years before, he had seen the drum for the first time and had had the sun sign shot into his body. But the house had burned down. Only the foundation and the chimney remained. The basement was half-filled with sand, bricks and rotten beams.

Out of this basement, a brown, furry bear spirit jumped into his body, in one silent leap.

Jon walked over to the nearest neighbor. There he learned that the people who once lived in the house were dead.

Jon picked up a hitchhiker in a curve. It was an older man with a green knapsack.

"Will you accept me?" asked the hitchhiker.

"What do you mean?"

"What's good comes by itself. One need not watch out for it. But beware of evil. It shows up in happy moments and comes upon us when we are warm with love. It takes on many different disguis-

es. And if it can't reach us from the front, then it will hit us from behind. It hides along all the roads we choose," said the man.

There was a long silence in the car. They drove by a few houses on the wide tundra. A trailer truck came toward them, roared by and the gust created by the large vehicle tossed his light van toward the ditch. Jon was concentrating on his driving. There was something strange about this passenger and the way he talked.

Jon called on the bear spirit and noticed his anxiety disappear.

"I'm not afraid," he said to the stranger. But the hitchhiker was not there any more. He and the knapsack had vanished.

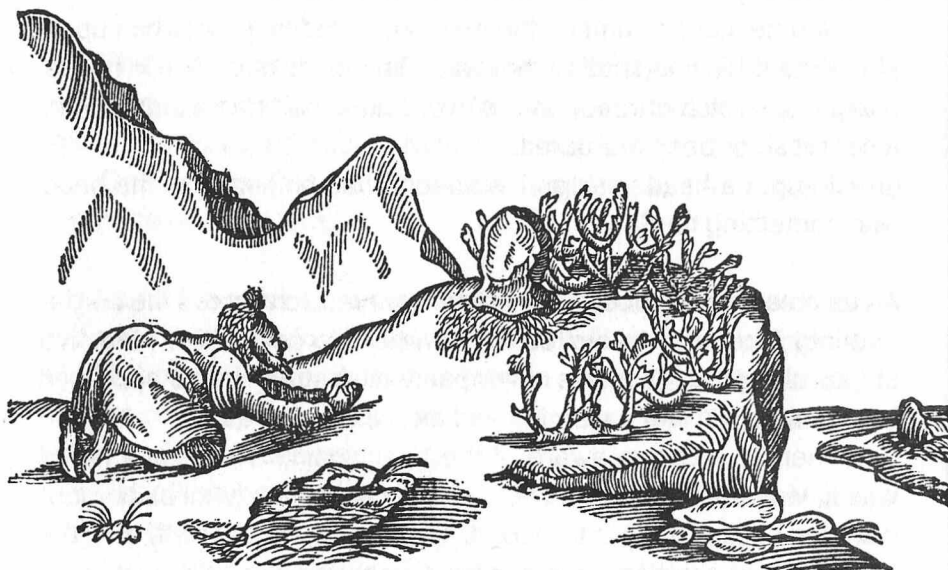
Had he stopped and let the man out? Had he picked him up at all? Was it his imagination that was playing tricks on him? It was along this stretch of road, on a curve, that a man had either died in a car crash or been murdered.

Jon got a headache, as if someone had hit him over the head with something hard.

A customs officer stood in the window, waved Jon across the border and into Finland. He shifted the vehicle into gear. The reflective stripes along the road were newly painted. A stranger had appeared in his car, given him a warning and then disappeared.

Then he became aware of the bear again. The bear's name was Ij, was a sow. She ran next to the car as if sixty miles an hour were the easiest thing in the world. Ij jumped back and forth over the van. Then she trotted up on the road, speeded up and disappeared into the darkness. Ij ran ahead of him in the night and took care of things; even his headache she took with her.





JON WAS EMBRACING the trunk of a pine tree, wanted to breathe groundedness into his body. But it did not work. He looked up along the trunk, looked up through the tree crowns. He had the feeling he came from a place far up there. Actually, he belonged to the star people and some day he would return home. He put his cheek against the rough surface of the trunk.

It gave him a sensation of falling upward.

The last few days had been filled with lots of activity and extraordinary events. They had demanded his full attention. He had both gained energy and burned energy. Now he was back on the right course. He relaxed. The driver's seat welcomed his body. Near midnight, he saw Saanen, like a shadow, against the pale moonlight. Clouds were rolling in at a fast pace from the coast, covered the drifting moon, then unveiled it again. The car rocked along the deep washboard surface of the road.

There was no light in the house. The car was gone and no one woke up when he knocked. Liisa and Heaika were obviously not home. Should he go up to Saanen, take a chance that Abraha was there?

Jon drove up to the road again. In the moon glow the mountain was casting its shadow across the road. Jon speeded up. The customs officers waved him out of Finland and back into Norway. He had made a decision. He was traveling through the night in search of the drum. If one had burned, he would find the other. He would break into the house and look for the drum. If it was there, he would take it, like the old man had taken the knife. If it was not there, he would perhaps find a clue to guide him further.

He drove by the police station. This was not the right time to report the reindeer theft. The office was closed; besides, he was on his way to commit thievery himself.

There were no lights on in the house below the mountain. Jon drove slowly by. Further up, he turned around, let the van coast down the hills. He wanted to park below. He turned onto a logging road and drove until the vehicle was out of sight from the main road. Jon fastened the knife to his belt, took a screwdriver and a flashlight with him.

Quietly, he walked through the pine trees, climbed up on the hillside, stopped under an overhanging rock where he had a view of the house. It looked smaller than he remembered it from last time. Even the clouds seemed to be on his side as they gathered in front of the moon.

For a while, he stood and watched, his senses keen. There was no sign of life. He noticed a cave behind the rock. Patches of fog crept down from the mountains as he walked toward the white house.

Their car was gone. Obviously, they were not home. Jon took it as a favorable sign, felt the spirits were with him again.

He walked around the house, shone a beam of light into the kitchen. The ashtray was on the table with cigarette butts in it, as before. The rag rug lay neatly on the floor inside the kitchen door. The kitchen door itself was slightly ajar. He could see the stairway. There was a chest in a room on the second floor and this was the chest Jon wanted to peek into.

He removed the rest of the caulking from the window. Again, a fly was buzzing around him. After a while, it disappeared.

It was an easy task to bend the nails in the rotten frame. He pressed the tip of the knife inside the pane and pulled. The glass came loose. Jon set it on the ground. Then, he unlatched the lower hasp. With the blade of the knife, he pulled the upper hasp loose. Then, all he had to do was open the window and crawl in.

He stood inside a narrow room. There was complete silence. By the far wall, he vaguely made out a sofa and a low table. He turned on the flashlight. A growling wolf was hanging on a wall, a picture torn out of a weekly magazine. The room smelled of stale air.

There was still not a sound to be heard. He felt safe and turned the flashlight off.

In the kitchen he noticed human smells, a faint smell of tobacco and tar from the wood that lay split and ready by the stove. Without making any noise, he passed through the kitchen and out into the hallway. He was on familiar ground now. He ran up the stairs two steps at a time. Then he stood in the upper loft hallway. He lit the flashlight, looked around and turned it off.

His heart was pounding. Other than that, everything was quiet. Jon knew where he was going. At one time, the doorknob had had a wooden handle. Now only the sharp iron peg was left. The knob came loose as he pushed it down. Then he opened the door.

A person was lying on the wooden bench.

No, he was wrong. It just looked like someone was. The room was empty. The table and the chair where the man had been sitting were still there. Jon walked in. In the light from the flashlight, he saw the chest. It was locked with a padlock. The fittings were fastened by four screws.

The first two screws came out easily. The third one was difficult. Again and again, the screwdriver slipped. Then he jumped, stopped what he was doing. Was he hearing a sound outside the house? He squatted down, quietly like a mouse, his senses acute. But no more sounds reached him. He continued to loosen the stubborn screw. The groove on the top was getting worn. His palms were sweaty and the screwdriver kept slipping.

Faint noises traveled through the night. It sounded like quiet footsteps. He froze. His heart began to beat faster. His body stiffened in the uncomfortable position. He slowly stood up, still holding the screwdriver. Did he hear a door opening? Then everything became quiet.

Jon heard someone coming up the stairs. He took a few quick steps, hid behind the half-opened door. The person in the hallway

stopped and turned back. Jon thought he heard the front door being opened and then closed.

The house was quiet again. Jon began to work the screwdriver. He pulled out the stubborn screw. The last one turned easily. Jon removed the fittings, began to lift the cover. Then he suddenly felt he was being watched. He spun around. Immediately, he came to his feet. The sound of quick steps was coming from the hallway. A person stood in the stairway. Jon leaped on top of him. They tumbled down the stairs.

Jon was the first one back on his feet. He ran down the steps and ripped at the front door. It was locked. He could hear the other person getting up at the foot of the stairs. Jon ran into the kitchen. There another person stood, ready to grab him. Jon put on the brakes, skidded on the rag rug and fell just as the man swung at him with a piece of firewood. Because Jon was falling, the man missed. But he was soon on top of him again, aimed for his head but hit the floorboards. The third time, he was hit. Jon was halfway to his feet. The blow struck him in the shoulder instead of on the head. Then the other man disappeared.

Jon dashed out of the kitchen. Now the window was closed. He ripped the hasps open, ready to jump. There, outside, a third person stood waiting for him. Jon turned, still with the screwdriver in his hand. He would fight if necessary.

The kitchen was empty, the front door open. Jon dashed outside in one long leap. A shadow appeared around the corner, headed toward him. Jon jumped to the side and sprinted into the darkness. It was very dark. Another shadow became visible in front of him.

Again he was hit. By a club. The blow hit straight across tendons and bones at the tip of his shoulder. He thought he heard something break. His hand and arm went numb. He lost the screwdriver. But he kept running toward the mountains. The men were all around him. He took advantage of the darkness and the shadows. He forced himself to breathe silently. There had to be at

least three or four of them. They were trying to surround him. His options were either to change into a stone or somehow slip by between them.

Up on the hillside, it was pitch dark. His ears searched for sounds, his eyes for moving shadows. His feet found places without branches and loose stone. He was going to escape. He had to. He would not let them catch him. Jon struggled ahead in the dark, ran, listened, ran. But the higher up he climbed, the closer his pursuers came. Now he could hear them whisper.

Pain shot through his arm and shoulder.

Suddenly, Jon knew where he was. He was by the overhanging rock where he had stood and watched the house. He had seen a cave there. He would disappear into the cave, lie there until the following night if necessary. He found the opening, crawled in. He reached the back of the cave. It was dark and quiet in there. Jon curled up like a fetus. His only thought was to become invisible. Slowly his pulse rate slowed down. He could not hear his pursuers any more. After a while, he began to relax. His shoulder throbbed. He had to change his position.

The cave was nice. It was cozy. But somehow it felt like it was alive. No one would find him here. He was safe.

Then he felt the cave beginning to move. It contracted, tightened up around him, grabbed him. Jon kicked and flailed around.

A human being held Jon tight in his arms and was laughing. It was a high-pitched, crazy laughter that echoed through the stillness. He had been fooled. He was trapped, had walked right into the lap of one of his pursuers.

He was frightened. And furious. He found strength he did not know he had. No one could get him without a fight. He struggled to get loose. He grabbed the arms that held him. He was not able to push them away. He had to find the fingers and break them before he, himself, got crushed.

One of the hands that held him was hard, cold and smooth. The truth hit him like paralyzing poison. He had walked straight into the arms of the man he, at all cost, wanted to avoid.

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JON CAME TO, opened his eyes. He was surrounded by a milky-looking gray light. A few pale stars appeared and disappeared. He was cold. He was pinched between a tree and a large stone. He stood up. Then the pain fully woke him. He had to lie back down, relax. Carefully, he inched his way up again, without using his shoulder, supporting himself against the tree. Below him, he saw the white house. It looked just as deserted now as last night. Why would anyone even think to build a house in the bottom of this ravine, between the peaks?

What had really happened? He had been in a fight and had been hit twice in the shoulder. The first time he tried to get out the front door, it was locked. The next time it was open. Finally, he walked into the trap. And what a trap! He had almost gotten crushed by the iron grip. The artificial hand had saved him. He had made himself small. Then there had been enough space. He had slid out between the stiff, unmovable fingers.

This is how he had saved his life.

Liisa and Heaika were still not home. Jon parked there. He took out his knapsack, placed the crystal in one of its pockets, strapped on the sleeping bag and headed for the tent site below Saanen. At the store he bought some food to take along.

On the plateau, he found the lavvo poles naked. The canvas was gone. The stones in the fire pit cold. Abraha had moved his things. He had a cabin behind Saanen. But there the tundra stretched wide. Should he try and search for it? Or go home?

The sun was shining through the mist. It was still early afternoon. He was hungry. He lit a fire. He fetched water from the spring. He made coffee. He sliced the black Finnish bread, spread on margarine. Why can't the Finns learn how to make decent



bread? Jon ate, even though the food did not taste good. The injured shoulder bothered him. He was tired. He crawled into his sleeping bag.

While the fire died out and the sun rose, he slept and dreamed he could fly. A tall, dense fence grew up around him. There was barbed wire wound around the top and the barbs grew bigger the closer he came. But he made a decision in his dream. He would make it. He had to get across. Then his wings obeyed and lifted him across.

On the other side, the winds were brisk and it was easy to fly. The landscape below him was clear and open. He then spotted something far down below. He had found what he was searching for, a cabin by a lake. Jon woke up and packed up his things. He was in a hurry. He had to find Abraha. He followed a path around the mountain. It sloped toward a low ridge. He trotted along with the hope that the path would lead him to the one he was seeking. The air was clear. The distances seemed shorter than they were. Even though he was jogging, it took a long time before there was much ground between him and Saanen.

When he finally reached the high point, the path disappeared. He continued in the same direction. Now he was running. It was easier here where the tundra sloped downhill. He was warm, sweated. Because of his shoulder, he had to be cautious. After a while, he stood at the edge of a wide swamp. He should have followed the high ridge, not set out down into the bogs. Now he did not even see Saanen any more. The sun was setting against the mist of the horizon. It was bright red but faded after a while.

Jon came into a birch grove. The trees grew in clusters between small knolls. The reindeer moss crunched under his feet. But the suppleness in his muscles was gone. Even though he ran, he felt cold. He was also beginning to get discouraged. The tundra was wide. Abraha could just as easily live in the complete opposite direction. Should he turn around? Just then, he noticed a river in front of him. He took another rest by the river. He wanted coffee but

was in no mood to make a fire. He lay on the ground, rested. He could make it back before dark. If he kept going and did not find the cabin, he would have to spend the night out.

He lay down on the riverbank and drank until his thirst was satisfied. While he was lying there, four ducks came swimming down with the current. He was lying on the very edge of the bank, watching them. When they were opposite him, they turned upstream, floated in place. Then they let themselves move back downstream as if they invited him to follow and not give up. He had not walked more than five minutes before he saw a lake in front of him. On the bank, where the river joined the lake, stood a cabin.

No one answered when he knocked on the door but it was unlocked. He went in, said hello.

It smelled of fish in the cabin and the stove was warm. A coffee kettle stood on the hot plate. In a red plastic tub some plates and cups were soaking in water. A loaf of bread and a pack of margarine were on the kitchen table, along with a bag of kitchen salt and a box of sugar cubes.

Behind the kitchen was another room. He could see a bunk and a table in there. There was a radio on the table. Outside the window, a few fishing nets were hanging on a rack.

A little bit of coffee was left in the kettle. Jon took one of the cups from the tub, dried it with toilet paper.

So this is where Abraha lives.

Just as he filled the cup with coffee from the kettle, the door opened and a person entered the room. Jon turned around.

There was a woman standing there, a complete stranger, and not the man he was looking for.

She was at least sixty years old and small of stature. Her hair was gray but her eyes were young. Jon set the kettle and the cup down. Of course, she had to show up just as he was in the process of helping himself. He greeted her. She dried her hands on her dress before she shook his hand. Her hand was still wet, and a little cold.

She was not just sixty, had to be well over, called herself Akko, looked strangely familiar.

He began to explain. He was looking for Antti. He thought this was Antti's cabin. He had been thirsty and had helped himself.

"What do you want with the old man?" asked Akko.

"I wanted to ask him something."

"So you are looking for him?"

Suddenly, the whole story sounded unbelievable. Here he stood in front of a grandmother with sharp eyes, older than Tomas. Could he tell her that he had seen a drum in a dream? And that he was searching for the drum, wanted to steal it? He had even broken into a house to do so. She probably would think he was crazy and that he was breaking into both houses and cabins. He remembered something Tomas had told him many years ago: One should never talk about the old shamanic drums.

"Yes, do you know where he lives?" asked Jon.

"Not here."

She let him out of her sharp gaze, turned suddenly, disappeared out the door. Without a word.

Jon wondered what he should do next. He'd better wait for Akko. He might as well drink the coffee. He sat down by the table. The coffee was strong and lukewarm.

It had grown darker outside and inside. With the evening came the cooler air. The coals had died out in the stove. He found wood and lit another fire. The old woman had hopefully not vanished for good. Or perhaps she had been a ghost, like the man in the car, or someone who showed up when he was breaking the rules? Like last night.

Jon rolled out his sleeping bag, placed it along the wall. He could not go any further today and might as well settle in here for the night. Akko knew Abraha. What did he want with the old man, he imitated her. She must not know him very well. She did not have the mind to understand. That was typical. If someone was different, they were looked upon as being weird.

After a while in the dark, his agitation settled. He was tired. Mostly tired of his own company. It did not feel good to be alone. To tune into his feelings was usually healing for him. But now when he thought he got in touch with something, it slipped away. There was no healing here. The bear that took his headache was also gone. He was filled with an unclear uneasiness. Uneasiness was a bad word in his vocabulary. It was uncomfortable, unhappy, unfortunate, unbearable, unbalanced, unhealthy. Uneasiness is to call forth something unwanted, he had once written. Love is to call forth something good.

If only Akko would come back. That would at least be something, even though she wasn't Lajla. To have the company of the sharp-eyed, grumpy woman would be better than the company of his own uneasiness. He lay down on top of the sleeping bag. He thought he could see through the roof into the clouds. Up there, a man was walking around. And he was darker than all the clouds. The man scouted and hunted. For him.

Jon was awakened by a light being lit and filling the room.

He opened his eyes slightly to see who lit the lamp. It was an unfamiliar woman who stood there. Not Akko.

Then he heard voices outside. Two other people came into the cabin. He squinted in their direction, watched them each set their loads down. They glanced over at him. He did not recognize any of them. Finally, a fourth person came.

At first, he did not recognize Akko. She came in singing. Her hair had changed. It was black and straight, not gray as before.

Was he really awake?

Or had he awakened in a dream, lighter than air?

Akko was the woman from his dream, the woman who had appeared with Abraha.

Together with Akko were Isir, Ellen and Ylvira. He knew them but could not remember where he had seen them before. Isir placed the lantern on the floor. The four women sat down around it. Jon

joined them. The lantern became a flickering fire. The cabin disappeared into nowhere. They sat on a mountain at the far end of a valley. Below them was a lake. A river ran out of the lake, twisted through the valley and disappeared.

"Here he is," said Akko suddenly and nodded toward him.

"Can he handle it?" asked Isir.

"He found his own way," answered Akko.

"He doesn't look that strong," said Ellen.

"I don't think he can do it," repeated Isir.

"He came on his own," said Akko again.

"Should we help him?" asked Ylvira.

"I suppose we can try," said Ellen.

For one reason or other, they were talking about him. Isir acted skeptical toward him. But he did not understand why. Why did they talk about him as if he weren't present? And why was he not able to answer them?

Then Isir began to joik. It was a melody he had heard before. It could easily have been very long ago. He wasn't able to remember when. Just as he thought he remembered, he forgot. Isir reminded him of Lajla but her facial features were more Mongolian. An avalanche of pictures passed before him, back in time, out of this lifetime, to the time when his ancestors came wandering from the East and discovered the continent Europe. This was in the time before the other peoples, Indo-Europeans, came. This he saw in the dark night of history. The stars came closer and closer. The four women joiked. He was not able to join them even though he tried. He could neither talk nor joik.

Ylvira began to dance by the fire. She jumped back and forth across it. Jon realized she was no longer an old, plump woman. She was young, had shed the years. The others mirrored her movements. They stamped their feet on the ground in a steady rhythm. Their bodies moved in rhythm with each other. It was a dance they were familiar with. He tried to be part of it but was not

able to. He felt self-conscious. The women could do something he could not.

Ellen poured water to drink and splashed a few drops on the hot stones in the fire pit, steam rose. Akko kept the fire alive.

Jon looked at them with no understanding of what was taking place. He was annoyed, felt left out. He missed Lajla. She was never there when he needed her. A cold breeze reached him from somewhere in the dark, brushed a chill across his neck. He drew back. He wished she were there. She had also been given a joik. He wanted to leave.

Then, Akko suddenly pulled him into the circle.

He looked at the four around him. They moved in one rhythm. They were one energy. He was in a circle of women. He felt tense, thought at first it was they against him. They were joiking, but not for their own pleasure. It was not they against him. They danced with a purpose. They did it for him. They fought against something he could not see. They had a wisdom he lacked. They used a weapon he could not use against an enemy his eyes could not see but that he nevertheless felt the presence of.

Something was at stake.

They were performing a ritual.

It was performed to help him.

It seemed as if their lives depended on it.

Then his feet found the rhythm, his voice hit the notes.





*Shaman's drum. For prophecy noiade placed pointer on drum-hide and beat with hammer. Through movements of pointer from one figure to another, drum gave answer to question.*

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"WHAT HAPPENED?" ASKED Jon.

"You didn't understand?"

"You helped me."

The four women nodded.

"How do you feel?" asked Akko.

"Fine."

The women nodded again.

"I became one with you. Energy filled my body."

Again they nodded. Their faces lit up.

"You looked pale when you came," said Isir.

"Your eyes were yellow," Ellen told him.

"Your energy was depleted," concluded Ylvira.

"I feel strong now."

"That's because you were able to open up and receive help," said Akko.

"Why do you want to help me?"

"You were given a dream."

"Yes."

The fire was burning quietly as if made of hard wood. The night was still dark. But even the darkness had lost some of its density. They sat on the ground that had been stamped hard and flat by feet. Not just their feet, but stamping feet before them. He understood that this was an old dancing place on a mountain.

"How do you know about the dream?" asked Jon.

No one answered him. Jon became absorbed in his own thoughts. He stared into the flames. He had done this many times before. The fire turned into smoldering embers. It took on the same color as the eastern horizon. Then the sun rose, round, red as gold. The light hit the mountains, the soft ridges, the tundra--and then it filled the entire valley below them. The sun sparkled in the water of



a river. Suddenly, Jon spotted something moving along the river-bank. He took a closer look. It was a bear and the bear jumped out into the river and was standing in the middle of the current. It was fishing. It was swinging its paws and tossing salmon up on the bank.

"Look at him," he said, pointing toward the bear.

"The Mosegubbe is enjoying himself," replied Akko.

The bear lumbered back up on land, rising up on two legs facing the sun. Then he disappeared between the trees. The sun sailed over the horizon. The landscape looked unbelievably green and lush. Even the light seemed green.

Isir said: "I'm the oldest here. I remember the Sun-Daughter. She was the first. Now there are many who claim we descended from the Sun-Son. But it was the Sun-Daughter who gave birth to the sons. She gave birth to the daughters also. She is the ancestress. The Sun-Daughter was kind to animals. She tended her herd well. It thrived and grew numerous. She gave the herd to her descendants. They were supposed to treat it with the same loving hands.

"The Moon-Daughter's name was Askovit. She treated her herd poorly. Therefore, it died. The wisdom in her lineage has also died."

"Why are you telling me this?" he asked.

"You grew up among Moon People."

Ellen said: "I'm the next oldest here. I know that the Sun-Daughter's family was a family of chiefs. They were greater than ordinary human beings. But as time went on, the Sun-Daughter chiefs became fewer and fewer. The Moon-Daughter's descendants hunted these chiefs, wanted to kill them. But there was always one who would escape and return."

"How does one become a chief?" asked Jon.

"To be a chief means to live within the wisdom."

Ylvira spoke: "I'm younger than Ellen but older than Akko. The eagle is the tribe's bird. It can see everyone as it soars high in the sky. The eagle sees what the tribe lacks. I met a white eagle in the mountains. It told about a new chief coming. An old drum would

help the chief. One day the drum will lead the chief to itself. Today the drum is in evil hands. But the man who has it cannot control it."

"Does the drum have a will of its own?" asked Jon.

"How else do you think it came into your dreams?"

Akko said: "I'm the youngest. When I was young, I heard the old joiks. Today people don't remember them. Now they are only joiked by the stars of the night and by the sun and the wind. But the joiks are alive among the ancestors and now they are beginning to send them back."

"How?"

"They are bringing the wisdom down to us from a place beyond the sun and the stars," Akko told them.

Together they began to joik. They could not sit still. They stood up. They swayed in the rhythm as if they were held by larger hands that rocked them back and forth. They began to jump and stamp to the rhythm. The old women were moving around like children.

"Everyone knows about us but few speak of us," they continued.

He was so fascinated by the joik and the dance that he, at first, did not pay attention to the words. Then he listened with greater awareness and realized they were joiking about him.

The shadows are gathering.

But he is alive.

He needs the power.

For he is alive.

The shadows are gathering.

But he is alive.

He walks toward the light.

For he is alive.

They repeated this joik over and over again until Jon became dizzy. He thought he was seeing an enormous, white bird. Its wings covered the entire sky. Then the women changed the text, gave the joik new words.

Be strong, be strong.  
Be strong by loving.  
Be strong, be strong.  
Be strong by laughing.  
Be strong, be strong.  
Be strong by joiking.  
Be strong by believing.  
Be strong, be strong.  
Be strong by loving.  
Be strong, be strong.  
Be strong by taking a stand.  
Be strong by facing the fear.

There were bear tracks in the sand.

The women undressed. Jon was used to older women being shy about their bodies. But these women took their clothes off without shyness, walked out into the water. They splashed and sprayed water on each other. Their stomachs and breasts swayed back and forth. They were beautiful. It was as if they belonged in the water. He also felt the urge to bathe. He undressed and walked out into the river, shy about his nakedness and his white skin and about the swaying, soft organ that was shrinking in the chilly air.

The women splashed water on him. They were standing around him. He splashed water back, surprised that the water was so warm at this time of year. Then he realized he was getting an erection. He was embarrassed, could not hide it. The women around him were not embarrassed. They became more excited. Lajla had told him that the water was alive. It had carried her vulnerability away. Now the water in the river was washing away the embarrassment he was feeling. That the erection was shameful and sinful. He felt proud of it. He wanted to show it off, wanted them to see it. He was not dirty. They were not dirty. The bodies were sacred and clean. The swaying, smooth breasts were sacred. His erection and their wet genitals were sacred. The hands touching his body were sacred and

the voices that nurtured him spoke the words he had most wanted to hear. A wicked and sharp church spire of reprimands, sexual anxiety and YOU SHALL NOT crumbled in the sand around him.

He danced with them on the riverbank, danced the Sun dance with them like he had seen the Mosegubbe do earlier that morning.

Afterward, he wondered if he had slept with all four of them there on the sandbar. Or what had happened? He felt reborn and unbelievably strong. His body was drawing energy from the sun, became radiant. He had been cleansed, felt prepared. They played together, performed a ritual from the tribal tradition. It was humorous, earthy, sensual and soft. He began to laugh. He saw before him the clergy with their pompous robes and their formal, ministerial and condemning words from the pulpit. It was spiritless and without compassion. He had listened to so many sermons that went against his religious beliefs. Never happiness, always cold damnation. Little warmth, never joyous.

The pulpit, raised above the congregation, was the patriarch's bastion, was the kingdom's son and the military's half-brother. The pulpit was the patriarch's power. From there, the patriarch ruled over the souls and the desires, even today and even though the ritual had become an empty gesture and the words dead sounds from the mouths of the servants of the State.

The people in power had condemned the power of faith, what Jesus had awakened when he sat and fasted by a stone in the mountains.

Jon had seen a church tower fall. He laughed. He laughed until he fell over. He heard that Akko began to joik and felt the women's hands touching him, patting him with an even rhythm as if they were beating on a drum. The four of them were the world's best hands-on healers. At first, his body began to glow. Then he relaxed, felt like he was falling and falling. Deep inside him he could feel a dull pain that would not let go.

He was a Sun-Daughter's son growing up among the Moon-Daughter people. As a child, he was sent away to strangers. They

did not understand his heritage. They tried to take everything away from him, the language, the self-identity and his pride, not by fair means, either, but through mental and physical abuse. What had happened to him was the same as what the tribe had gone through. The State had taken everything of value from the tribe, their beliefs, their language, their land, everything. The State had not carried out its mission by fair means either; on the contrary, had used foul play.

All this was brought up inside him, became clear to him, and melted away in him as the women kept up their percussive moves and Akko joiked.

Through his half-opened eyes, he saw Isir as she bent over him. She began to rub her hands, around and around, on his stomach. His abdomen felt warmer and warmer under her touch. It opened up. Then she began to pull something out of his stomach, something that was putting up resistance.

"Did you get it?" Ellen sounded anxious.

"It is coming now," responded Isir.

"Did you get the whole thing?"

"I have the whole thing now."

"Look at that head!"

"One in each end," said Isir.

"Now I can see it, too. It's a pike without skin and scales," said Ellen.

"He is its scales," responded Isir.

Jon could not see the fish they were talking about. But he could feel something being extracted. He had heard that various spirits, reptile spirits and insect spirits, would take up residence in the human body and live there as parasites.

He had a pike with jaws in both ends extracted from his stomach. He saw before him the skinless and scaleless deformity, bent over, tried to vomit, but nothing came out.

Isir recited some kind of an incantation. He did not understand what she said. She was speaking the spirit language. But it sent the repulsive creature far away.

"Do you see anything around his heart?" asked Ylvira.

"Just a minute," answered Isir.

"There is something there."

"What?"

"Let me get it," said Ylvira.

Jon felt new hands beginning to rub across his heart. Jon thought he heard flies buzzing.

"They are coming," said Ylvira.

"I can see them," responded Isir.

"Me, too. They are crawling on your hands," said Ellen.

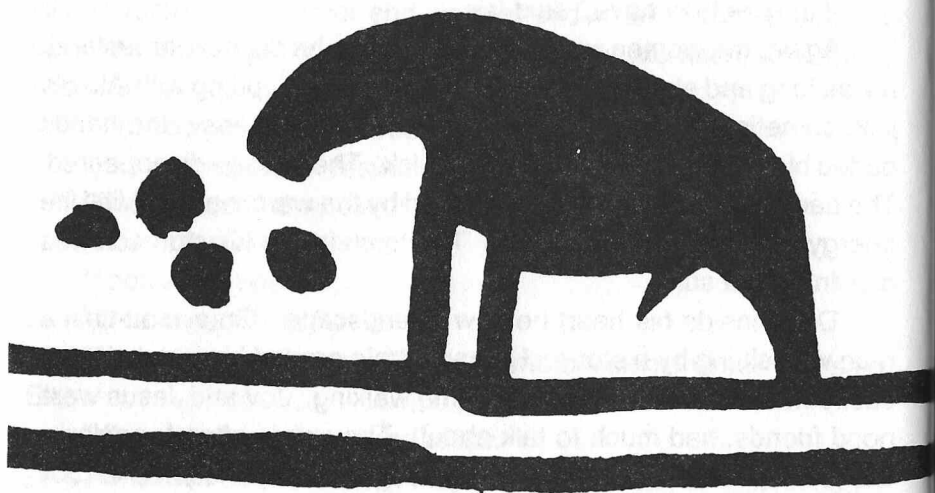
"Have they been put on him?" asked Ellen.

"Perhaps," answered Ylvira.

"I'm sure they have," said Isir.

Again, the women recited an incantation he did not understand. It was long and strangely rhythmic, sometimes blending with Akko's joik, sometimes finding its own rhythm. Soft and easy, the hands patted his body. The healing came quick. The nausea disappeared. The deep pain was also gone, released by the warm hands. Vital life energy spread through his body. The torch inside his stomach was glowing like a sun.

Deep inside his heart he saw a landscape. On a mountain a man was sitting by a stone. He had a halo around his head. It was Jesus who sat there. Then Jov came walking. Jov and Jesus were good friends, had much to talk about. They were often together in the mountains where they gained strength to help the people. Jov had the drum with him. They were sitting there talking about it.



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THE WOMEN TOOK off from the mountain, soared through the air back toward the cabin. They flew in formation like swans. He also felt like flying. He began to run downhill, leaped into the air but fell flat on the ground as usual. Then he jumped from a stone. Still he still could not fly. If he had been courageous enough to jump off the edge of the mountain, then perhaps even he could have flown.

"Women are the strongest in the air," said Akko, glided in an arc above him before she disappeared with the others.

He followed them back to the cabin. Not till then, after all the jumping and running and dancing, did he notice that his shoulder was no longer hurting.

When he entered the room, they were already sitting around the table. The ritual and the flight belonged to the past, were nothing they wanted to discuss any further. Now their minds were on something else.

"Come here, Banzo," said Akko, waved him closer.

On the table stood a cradle. Akko lifted it up, turned it around so he could view it from all sides. It was an old cradle. The reindeer hide that covered the woodwork was dark in color, almost black. The red, yellow and blue decorative ribbons were faded. Three woven strips of material had been stretched from the foot of the cradle to the head cover. These strips were fastened with silver buttons to hold up the shawl that was placed over the sleeping child.

But something was missing. It was the piece of cloth used to wrap up the child. A few remnants of this materials were still hanging from the cradle's edge where it had been stitched down.

"I tore it off," said Akko, demonstrated, with a quick motion, what she had done. The other women smiled. Then Jon realized there had to be a special reason for them to tell him this.

"Why?" he asked.



"When I saw what they had done to the cradle, I simply had to get it off."

"He does not understand," said Isir, nodded toward Jon.

"I walked straight in and grabbed the cradle," Akko told them. "People were gathering around me. I pushed one person away who tried to grab me by the shoulder. The moment the woman herself came striding in, I banged a bottle of alcohol on the counter. 'You get this back and I get the cradle.'"

"Was that what you told her?"

"That's what I told her, but she tried to pull the cradle out of my hands but I wouldn't let go."

"What did she do then?" asked Ellen as if she already knew the answer but enjoyed hearing it again.

"She called the man, who came rushing in. 'She's a thief,' the furious woman kept yelling. People were, by now, standing in a circle around us. The man wanted to take the cradle from me."

"But you held on," repeated Ellen.

"I held on. 'What is going on here?' the man asked as he let go of the cradle."

"Yes, what were you doing?" asked Jon.

"'This is mine,' was all I said. 'You swapped it for a bottle of alcohol and here is your bottle and I'm taking the cradle. It was not in my power to prevent it from happening in the first place, but it is in my power to take it back now.'"

"The bitch carried on and on, tugged on the cradle and called me a thief, and more people gathered around. There I stood, surrounded by unfamiliar faces and tourists in the middle of a collection of old antiques, old sleds, wolverine hides, hats, silver, pictures and books, and I had grabbed the finest cradle in the room. I couldn't help but chuckle.

"'No, this cradle is not yours, it is ours,' said the man in an extra-deep, quiet voice, in an attempt to calm the tempers. That's when I tore off the material they had sewn to the cradle so my initials became visible. I had carved them in the wood, on the inside. 'Look

here, here it says, 'AMnk' and that's my name, and in this cradle I laid my child when she was born, just as I myself lay there when I was a baby. I'm not stealing it. I'm paying you back, and even double, because it was a pint-size bottle you used when you bartered for it from the fool who was the child's father.'

"The man was now wiping sweat off his forehead and the woman let go of the cradle. The people stepped back. With the cradle in my arms, I strode out of this room filled with my ancestors' belongings. A few of the spectators clapped as I rushed out the door."

So it took an old woman to get things done. She had simply gone and retrieved it. She had not lacked courage like so many others do when they walk around and observe their grandparents' silver brooches, buttons and home furnishings. While their hearts are bleeding, they pretend not to be touched by it and end up leaving the storekeeper's private museum, with their tails between their legs and unaccomplished mission. It reminded him of the knife story. The man had taken it from a museum far away. She had done the same in her home town.

"Here are the letters," said Akko and showed them to him.

"I see them," he said, looked at the initials in the wood.

"Here is the name of my mother," she said, showed him some letters that had almost been erased by soft baby bodies. As Jon looked closer, another name came into view in the pine frame.

"There is another name." Jon grew excited.

"Yes," the women replied.

"It must go back several generations." He was proud of his discovery.

Just as he had spoken these words, he noticed, to his astonishment, still more initials, and then, name after name in a row of mothers grew out of the woodwork in the bottom of the cradle.

"It goes far back," said the women.

"Here, you can see my initials and my mother's," Ylvira pointed.

"Here are mine and my mother's," Ellen told him.

"And here are mine and my mother's," ended Isir.

"Gee," said Jon.

"It goes all the way back to the Sun-Daughter," said Isir.

"I will sew on a new cover," said Akko and the two of them nodded in agreement.

"Perhaps there will be use for this cradle again someday?" Isir had a mischievous smile on her lips.

"One never knows what might happen when you have menfolk visiting," added Ylvira.

"Perhaps he'll marry me and father another flock of children," Akko answered. Then all four of them laughed so hard the whole table shook and Akko, with her plump body, almost lost her balance and fell off the chair.

Jon looked around for another chair so he could sit down next to them. But there weren't any more chairs in the cabin. And the four women pulled their circle closer, gave him the cold shoulder. Just when he wanted to be part of the conversation, eight eyes sent him away.

Jon sat down on his sleeping bag in the lotus position, his back resting against the wall. Ritual dance was circle dance. Tribal meetings were round geometry. It led the energy around the circle and also from the participants' heads, hearts and bellies to the middle of the circle. It was an exchange of energy. The four around the table were talking together, were touching each other, were moving in the same rhythm, their voices were rising and sinking as they changed from intimate, calm words to exclamations, giggles and laughter.

He wanted to be in the center of their energy. But that ceremony was over now. He felt tired and cold. The night seemed to be endless, although it was almost over.

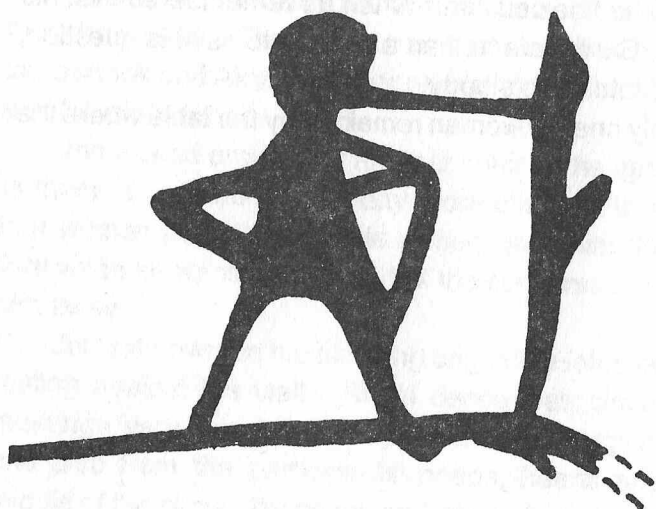
There was something he wanted to ask them before dawn. He did not dare to ask Isir, the oldest. She had been skeptical toward him before the ceremony. It would be best to ask one of the others. He would ask Ylvira. She was the first one in favor of helping him.

Would he be able to do it? Would he be able to get his hands on the drum?

But Ylvira did not respond when he asked. Neither did Ellen. Instead, they disappeared, one by one. One by one, they disappeared into Akko's body.

He had no choice but to ask Isir then. She was sitting with her back halfway turned. She had removed something repulsive from his stomach. She had helped him. When he remembered this, his fear disappeared. But before he had a chance to ask his question, she also vanished into Akko's body.

In the end, only one old woman remained by the table where the cradle was standing.



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WAKING UP FELT like falling from the heavens, falling toward the earth and the cabin and the body. Slowly falling from the great light beyond the darkness of the night toward the light and the playing shadows of the upcoming day. He enjoyed gliding down, soaring in big swooping arches on powerful wings, like an eagle.

The eagle was the great bird of power. When it tucked its wings and headed down to earth, it was a son of the heavens who landed.

Jon woke up.

He lay motionless, wanted to keep this feeling of flying. Light filled the room but he shut it out by pulling the sleeping bag up over his eyes. It was day all the same. The spell of the dream had been broken. He was in a hurry. He threw the sleeping bag aside. His shoulder was stiff but better than yesterday. He put his clothes on one by one. His socks and tennis shoes were wet.

In the other room Akko was sewing. She had a flowery blue and red fabric in her lap.

He wanted to talk about what had happened. He had to find out where Abraha lived. But he controlled his desires. He controlled his mouth.

"I will eat before I leave."

"Yes," she answered curtly, bit off the thread.

Jon found the food set on the table. He cut a slice from the dark Finnish bread he did not care for. The coffee kettle stood on the stove. But he did not want to help himself, like yesterday.

Jon looked for the cradle. It was not on the table, not anywhere. Where could it be?

Akko came over with a stern look on her face, sat down.

"I must continue on in my search for Abraha," he said.

"If that's what you must do."

"You wouldn't happen to know where he lives?"

"No, I'm not quite sure."

"Oh well." Jon chewed the dry bread.

"Where will you go then?" she asked.

"I don't know, but I must keep searching."

"It looks like bad weather coming," she said somberly.

"I'd better move on then." Jon packed up the bread and the cheese, put it into his pack.

"How is your injury?" she asked suddenly while he strapped on his knapsack.

Jon made a face.

"Not healed overnight?" she smiled. The entire woman changed with the smile, just like the sun changes a gray and dreary day. She took out two cups and poured coffee.

"You must have a cup before you go. Sit down."

"Thank you," he said, sat down, took a sip.

"So it hasn't improved overnight?" she repeated.

"It is actually pretty good now." Jon controlled his emotions. It was exciting to use his new power of self-control.

"Antti has a cabin further up the river. Perhaps seven miles from here. If I'm not mistaken, he is there now, setting nets or hunting ducks or whatever he calls what he pretends to do," she said.

"Great." Jon emptied his cup.

"But what's so special about this old, mad man who made you come all this way, run halfway across the tundra to see him?"

"I want to talk to him."

"That's what you said yesterday."

"I don't think Antti is an old, mad man," said Jon.

"You know him?"

"Yes. Do you?" He returned the question.

"Lord help me, you better believe I do. I have known him through all the best years of my life, and I would certainly not run halfway across the tundra after him any more. He is of no use to anyone."

"He is not?"

"We were once man and wife, until he lost his wits and everything else he had, poor guy."

"He has helped me."

"You're the first one I've heard say that. I also think you will be the last." While she said this, her voice grew sharp and her face closed up.

"Where is the cradle, by the way?" asked Jon. Just as the words jumped out, he felt he might have put his foot in his mouth.

However, Akko got up, walked into the other room and brought the cradle back with her. That was what she had been sewing on.

"You have seen this before?" she asked.

"You showed it to me last night."

"Did I?"

Could it really be that she didn't remember? Had the whole episode been a dream? Or was it simply something she did not want to talk about?

"You also told us how you got it back."

"You must be fantasizing." She looked at him sharply.

"I would have done the same thing. You got a lot for a bottle of alcohol."

"Yes," she replied.

"You have already put on a new cover, I see."

Akko nodded.

Suddenly, here he was, telling the old woman he would have done the same. He also had something he wanted to go after in the same way. She and he were on the same side.

"You had company last night," he finally said.

"Did you see them?"

"Yes. Who were they?"

"We have joked for you before."

"I want you and the others and anyone else who happens to listen to know that I'm grateful."

This jumped out of him, but in a somewhat awkward manner. He noticed how unaccustomed he was to saying thank you. He was



good at criticizing. But that language was unfit here. Again, a word beginning with "un," but here it was an appropriate word. The political language was unsuitable. It was unflattering. Unforgiving. Unproductive. Today's world needed a new language. A heart language. A language that included starry heavens and secret landscapes in the light beyond the dark. A language with room for openness and compassion. Man can think clearly with the wind up his nose. This was a classical statement by the first Lapp author, Johan Turi.

There was a silence between him and Akko.

"So it is true," she said finally.

"What?"

"That you have had visions. That you understand the spirit language. And that it wasn't just an old senile woman who was in her second childhood last night."

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JON WAS RUNNING along a path by the river, a path made by cloven hoofs. He had been running for half an hour or more. His feet were moving by themselves, felt like paws. The whole time he ran, he was watching for the cabin and thinking about how much there still was to learn.

The canyon opened up around him. In the distance, he saw the froth of a waterfall. To the left towered Saanen.

The wisdom is coming back. It is coming down from a place beyond the sun and the stars, just like Akko and the other flying shamans had told him.

It was a nice day in a spectacular canyon with a beautiful river and path. Above Saanen drifted clouds that looked like a hand pointing. The waterfall was much closer now. He wanted to run all the way and take a break when he got there. He had heard about runners who pushed themselves through exhaustion, pain and stiffness to a point beyond. Then they were able to continue indefinitely across the plains. He wanted to try this. Thoughts rushed through his mind as he ran along the river. He a oneness with nature. This was his nature. He loved this part of the country. It was good to feel he was capable of loving. That in itself was worth this trip into the mountains.

While the feeling of love grew inside him, he began to notice the tempo. His muscles were beginning to ache. He wanted to push beyond the pain. He forced himself to think about something else. The meadows and the mountains here were full of life. Dreamtime was near. In Dreamtime, everything happens outside time and space. He became more and more tired. He gasped for breath. The path was uneven and rocky. He was afraid he would step wrongly. Still, the waterfall was a good distance away. The landscape began to climb. He was not able to push past the pain to

the point beyond. He began to walk. When he reached the waterfall, Saanen had changed its profile. And the hand that was pointing above the mountain now looked like a horn.

A water ouzel flew through the mist of the waterfall.

A water ouzel bobbed its head up and down.

Then it speared a larva on the bottom.

The bird disappeared with the larva in its beak.

He had traveled through Dreamtime.

He had met four sisters.

They were the seer women of the fire.

What they thought became visible to others.

The seer women had danced for him.

They had showed him secrets.

They could fly like the water ouzel.

The wisdom came down from the sky.

The first Banzo had great strength.

He lifted stones no one else could touch.

Banzo had danced the Sun Dance with the bear.

Now Jon learned the dance from the seer women.

Jon left the waterfall, kept on walking.

After a while, the terrain became more rugged. The path would disappear and reappear, twisting along the river which also narrowed and widened along its course.

He had a feeling he was being followed. When he could stop and listen, everything was quiet. But when he walked, branches were breaking under feet behind him.

He was seeing evil creatures before him, dog-like faces, huge like monsters, with snouts like mongrels. They would sniff up lone-some hikers, hunt them down, kill and eat them.

Before his brother died, a creature had followed him at a distance in the mountains, walked parallel with him on the opposite side of the river.

Jon hid behind some boulders. The steps became more audible, came closer, straight for him. He squeezed as close to the stone as possible, was ready to fight.

Then a hand tapped him on the shoulder. The pain flared up, shot down his arm. The killer picked him up with a jerk, and part of his soul was lost at that moment. His will withered. He gave up.

At the same time, Isir appeared, looking serious and with her unbuttoned Norwegian sweater flapping in the air. The killer let go of him and disappeared.

Isir turned and walked away, motioning him to follow. He followed her deeper in between the boulders, into a cave and through the darkness. The further in they got, the lighter he felt until he again was lighter than air.

They fell out into the light in a landscape at the center of the earth. Around them, a herd of white reindeer was grazing. Up along the mountainside a cluster of laavos were standing. Smoke rose from the smoke flaps. People were walking back and forth between their various duties. Dogs were barking. There were even Indians here, in full headdress. They had horses.

"You are in danger."

Isir said this in a soft voice. She looked at him for a long time. And she grew as she stood there.

"Yes," he said as his fear faded.

"Someone was following you."

"I was ready."

"You let him come up on you from behind."

"Yes."

"Do you want the drum?"

"Yes."

"It is a dangerous mission because it resides in the wrong hands."

"Yes."

"It is almost time," said Isir.

"For what?"

"To win it back."

"Yes."

"Have you come on your own?"

"Yes."

"No, you have been called on."

"By whom?"

"In order to win the drum back, you must clearly stand within your own power so that nothing can rock you."

"Who has called on me?"

"Today our power objects are in the wrong hands. That's why we are a weak people."

"Yes. But who has called on me?"

"They who have come before you have been full of excuses. Excuses steal power and feed apathy. If you want to go further, you must take on a different attitude or die."

"I want to go further."

"Then there are no more excuses from here on out."

"I want the drum."

"You must become a warrior and find your weapons."

"Yes."

"A warrior in command of his weapons can lead the prey to himself," said Isir, placed her hands on his hurting shoulder. It became warm and the pain intensified.

"A warrior knows the right way to kill. Kills with respect. A true warrior can kill long-distance, can kill with power words alone. Can kill even more quietly, without a sound, through his helpers. He can even kill with a mere thought."

"I don't use black magic," said Jon.

"A warrior cannot make mistakes. Then it is all over. Then the warrior will kill himself."

"Who has called on me?" repeated Jon.

"To many, the drum is merely a piece of wood and the skin a piece of hide. The hammer is only a piece of horn. Some see them as antiques. Others see them as tools of the devil."

"I know that."

"You have to be careful," continued Isir. "He who has the drum will fight with all means to keep it. He is an evil man. The evil ones are the most dangerous. You think moral right is enough."

"Yes."

"You are a dreamer."

"I follow the rules."

"What rules?" asked Isir.

"I am supposed to heal souls."

"You have to win the drum first, before you can heal anything."

"I don't want to hurt anyone."

"That's an excuse."

"Then what are the rules?" asked Jon.

"From here on out, there is no way back. Either you win the drum or you lose everything."

Isir removed her hand from his shoulder. It felt as good as new.

"A killer is searching for you."

"I will fight," said Jon.

"The evil one has put him on you. He will take your soul. Then everything is lost and you will die a weak person. And we will remain a weak people," added Isir.

"There is only one thing the evil one does not have complete control of, and that's the drum. You asked who called on you. It is the drum that has called on you. The drum has its own will. I am connected to it."

Isir cut off birch bark, rolled it up into a torch and lit it. Then she moved the flames along his body until the torch stopped in front of his heart and belly. For a long time, the bark burned quietly. Then the light from the flames began to reach further and further out in one direction. Suddenly, the flames burst into roars and rumbles as if they were fighting with someone trying to blow them out. Then the bark cracked like gunfire and the flames shot like a spear from the torch.

"That scorched him good," said Isir.

"Who?"

"The killer. I burned him."

"I understand."

"He exploded. Now the evil one got a taste of his own medicine."

Isir continued to move the birch bark torch around his body. It was burning quietly again until the fire went out.

"Did you burn him completely?"

"He is gone. But there will be others and in other ways. You lose the battle if you are afraid."

Isir disappeared in a silver-gray fog that devoured everything and everyone.

At the same time, a stone fell down on the roof of a little white house. The stone rolled down the tiles and fell with a thumping sound to the ground next to the wall. Both people who lived in the house went out to see what was going on. The man recognized the stone. He had seen it for the first time a year earlier. The day it happened was a day he would never forget.

At that time, they had removed the stone from the scene of the crime. He had buried it in the swamp where he had also cut out the killer and given him his mission. Anyway, he had believed that the stone would be gone and gone forever.

Now it came rushing through the air and broke roof tiles over their heads. This was a clear message.

The man wanted to row out on the ocean and sink the stone into the depths of the sea. But she took it away from him. He could not defy her. She walked up on the hillside, hid it in a place where he would never find it.





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THE SILVER-GRAY FOG was inside his head, in front of his eyes. Slowly, it dissipated and drifted off. Isir was also gone. He was back outside the boulders, disoriented, with a buzzing sound in his head.

Become a warrior. Find your weapon. Kill with respect.

He wanted to be a warrior. The kind of warrior who led the prey to himself.

Then the drum sailed into his consciousness. On the skin he saw a bear, a reindeer and a feather.

He was trotting along the river, following an almost invisible path. Toward the cabin. Toward Abraha.

Abraha was always looking for caves, Sami-treasures and silver, Akko had told him. Abraha had found the gold treasure in the center of the mountain. He had brought it outside with him. Then he discovered that the whole world was burning. To save everything from being destroyed, he placed the treasure back in the mountain. Then the fire stopped.

There is gold in the mountains. And crystals. There are energies, stronger than iron, copper, silver, gold and uranium or whatever everything is called that is being mined. But we must stop the mining. Or it will end as Abraha had seen in his vision. The whole world will burn.

Abraha was wise enough to return the gold. Who else would be that wise?

He had to find Abraha. He needed help. To win back the tribe's drum should be a communal effort. Everyone ought to be in on it. But the communal spirit had been broken. Therefore, he had to find Abraha. What was impossible for one could be accomplished by several. What was perilous for one could be achieved by a few.

Jon came to a lake. There he noticed the structure. The cabin turned out to be a large gamme. It was larger than the gamme Jon had built. It stood in a cove at the edge of the birch forest where a meadow led down to the beach by the mouth of a river.

"Abraha," he yelled, stopped and listened, but there was no answer. Then he realized that Abraha wasn't there. No smoke came out of the chimney and the boat was pulled up on the shore.

Jon opened the door.

The gamme was empty and the stove was cold. His luck.

The room was round and the interior had been paneled. There was a wood floor and two windows. The bed was nailed to the wall, the mattress was lifted up and the bedding hung on a line below the ceiling. On a table, cups were turned upside-down and some pans were standing with their soot-covered bottoms in the air.

He did not like snooping around in other people's homes. This was the third time in two days. He went outside, closed the door. Haze swallowed the sun.

Jon set his pack down, walked down to the lake. A few ducks sailed in for landing on outstretched wings. But when they discovered this two-legged creature, they began to flap their wings again. Swish, swish, swish, swish. Flying in formation, they climbed into the air, leveled off and disappeared in an arc behind an island. From the west, dark clouds came rolling in. It was completely calm. The clouds came closer and closer without a sound.

Jon took off his tennis shoes, walked barefoot along the sandy beach in the cove. The dry sand felt warm against his skin. His feet made nice footprints where the sand was wet. The water was cool.

He lit a fire in the fire pit outside the gamme, watched the flames lick the little black coffee kettle. He was sitting like a yogi with crossed legs in front of the gamme up on the tundra.

A strange feeling, an uneasiness, grew in him.

Jon tried to concentrate, but the essence of it slipped away. It had something to do with his mission. With becoming a warrior. With finding his weapon. Or with the fear of losing. It was not an

emotion nor could it be described by pain. He unpacked what was left of the Finnish bread, the butter and a little cheese. The water boiled. He poured in coffee and let it sit to steep on one of the stones.

Then he suddenly saw the bear spirit dance and he understood.

It had been a spirit he had felt and what had bothered him had been beyond recognition from his ego point of view.

The bear was sitting contentedly on the ground as if her belly were full of berries. Her eyes shone like suns. Then the bear rose unexpectedly, quick as a bird. She jumped forward, baring her teeth. Suddenly, she was foaming at the mouth. The bear reared up. Two paws on the ground, two facing the sun. At the front of the paws, the claws were shining, dark, sharp.

Light and heavy,  
sensitive and aggressive  
all at the same time.

He shakes with excitement  
when he watches the bear dance in the moss.  
Remember, you are of Bear blood,  
someone had said.

This guardian spirit did not know the fear, the weakness which he was full of, the uncertainty which he had to fight against.

"Help me. I'm in danger. Without you, I'm nothing," said Jon.

Then he realized that the wisdom did not come only from a place beyond the sun and the stars. It also came up from a place beneath the moss, from where Ij had come.

The sky grew dark with stormy clouds. Thunder was rolling at a distance and lightning lit up the darkness between the clouds and the brown autumn tundra. Slowly, the thunder moved closer. He took refuge inside the gamme, counted the seconds between thunder and lightning until he could no longer separate one from the other. He

went back outside. Lightning struck simultaneously in all four directions. The lightning bolts were splitting the black clouds. Sparks were shooting out of the mountains. The earth rocked and trembled. Not since he was a little boy had he experienced an explosion of power like this.

Jon found the path toward Saanen, was on his way.

Then came the wind and the rain. At first, the drops fell sparsely, big and heavy, in the sudden gusts of wind. Jon walked quickly toward the mountain. But the rain caught up with him, a dense, heavy rain that drenched him in a short time. It came down in diagonal sheets and drowned the landscape around him. The clothes stuck to his body. After a while, the rain diminished, but soon it returned. The drops beat against his skin, washing him clean. The drops splashed on the ground, washing the earth clean. The drops exploded against the mountainside, washing it clean. Then they collected in puddles, formed small streams that merged and became rivers.

Jon had heard about herders who had been caught in weather like this. Then frigid air had come and they had frozen inside an armor of ice and were found standing like ice sculptures. He was soaked to the skin but warmed by an inner fire, a torch.

After a while, the fog sifted down the mountainsides; then it swallowed the whole mountain.

Soon the entire landscape was hidden in fog. Inside the thick wool, a man was struggling to keep on the path that would take him the shortest way home. In the same fog, a white eagle lifted into the air, climbed toward the sky. A short time after, the wind picked up. There was still a drizzle as the sky cleared. A rainbow appeared above Saanen.

In a place not far away, a stranger had just completed a strenuous task.

The stub of his arm was tired where the artificial hand was attached. He had worked hard since the stone returned, had used the drum the entire morning.

The man had drawn a wolf on the drum's skin. He had let blood drip on the drawing and had focused his will until the wolf came alive.

For a long time, he let the wolf sniff a screwdriver he had found in the yard. Then he had given the wolf his mission and sent him off.

Now he was wrapping up the drum, and he locked it up again.

His wife had brought out her needles, had pointed them in the right direction and placed them next to each other in a long row on the table.

She picked up a needle, recited an incantation and laid it down at the front of the row. She continued like this until all the needles disappeared over the edge of the table and vanished.

They looked at each other. It was done. Now all they could do was wait for what was going to happen in the coming days.





*Lasso rings, in which the rope is thrown out in a noose and is tightened around the reindeer's antlers.*

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HEAIKA AND LIISA were home. Jon was wet and cold and it felt good to get inside a house where the stove was roaring in the corner. He changed into dry clothes and got something warm to drink in a small glass. He told them where he had been. He had met Akko but was still searching for Abraha.

"What beautiful, bewitching weather," Jon said.

"We came home when it poured down the most, could hardly see through the windshield even with the wipers on high," replied Liisa.

"Those were great fireworks."

"I was glad I was sitting in a car. They say cars are safe during lightning storms, isn't that right, Heaika?"

"This was Bajan's weather. Cheers," said Jon.

"What is Bajan's weather?" Liisa returned his toast.

"Bajan is the Thunder God," explained Heaika.

"I found it eerie," she said.

"It was unusual for this time of year," said Heaika.

"And the rainbow!" Jon emptied his glass.

"We didn't see it," said Liisa.

"I saw it," responded Heaika.

"In the old days they said you could walk on it, up to the ancestors," Jon told them.

"Fascinating," remarked Liisa.

"Where have you been, by the way?"

"I had a meeting," replied Heaika.

"What happened?"

"Not much happening these days. Everyone is sick of politics. You, too. Cheers," said Heaika to Jon.

"I work politically."



"You were with us until the wave peaked. Now when we are in the trough, you have pulled away."

"I'm working on other things."

"You are becoming a hermit just like Antti. You run around in the mountains alone and look for caves and treasures and lost dreams. It won't be long before you begin to worship sacred stones."

They had been through this before, even in the days when they worked together politically. Then, Jon had restrained himself for the sake of unity and the Cause.

"I'm working with the most oppressed part of our identity. In this area, we also oppress ourselves. We have discarded our ancestors' spiritual heritage. A people without a past is a people without a future," said Jon.

"I'm afraid we forget to be political. People around us are politically involved all the time and they expect us to be also. They are not unreasonable if we get on the field and play their game." Heaika talked as if he hadn't heard what Jon had just said.

"They want us to play their game. Then they know we'll lose. We must play our own game. Not until then will we be able to create something."

"Today there is no cause big enough to get people committed." Heaika's voice sounded tired.

"There are a thousand good causes right outside the door. Ecology. Peace politics. It's not causes we lack but people," was Liisa's opinion.

"We don't have any leaders any more," responded Heaika.

"Causes create leaders."

"It's not that easy for a people as divided as ours. All our energy has been used up. The fight over Alta took it all. Actually, we are a destroyed people."

Liisa nodded.

"People participate in meetings so they can spend a weekend at a resort and write off the expenses. Everything is bread politics and comfort. It was different back in the days when we drove around

the northern hemisphere, Jon, at our own expense, and met in huts and lavvos, and planned."

"We came from the roots then," answered Jon.

"It also brought results."

"Yes."

"Now we are fighting in the dark, in Stallo's night, while all you want to do is walk on the rainbow."

"Back then the political language was effective. Inside and outside. Then the words were keys. They unlocked doors to further understanding. Now, we need new words that can open up to a new understanding that is much needed today," said Jon.

"Certainly," replied Heaika.

"I'm searching for that language."

"And you think you'll find it through shamanism? Through the Gannflies? The graveyard sand? The ghosts?"

"What I'm looking for is the wisdom that can heal bodies and souls."

"I don't believe in today's healers. My sister went to a hands-on healer. She had pain in one knee. He rubbed and rubbed, higher and higher up her thigh he rubbed."

"There are people who know the openings to the other world," said Jon.

"Do you really believe that?"

"I have met them myself. Now the old wisdom is coming back, down from a place beyond the stars and up from beneath the moss. We are the only people in Europe with such a heritage still alive."

"And this you think you know something about?"

"Yes."

There it was. He hadn't intended to say it. Still, it felt right. If he could not share it with his friend, who could he turn to? When it came down to it, Heaika would understand. Now Heaika was probably thinking it through. It would most likely create a response. Jon sent a thought to the bear spirit. What if Heaika would join him in the search?

"I really don't understand what you're talking about." Heaika broke the silence.

"I'm talking about what we lack today. That which can fill the emptiness. That which can give us the spark back. And the happiness."

"This is certainly needed. Because the ones who have sucked themselves into a political position are becoming more and more powerful, self-righteous and restriction-oriented every year," answered Heaika.

"So from that perspective, you don't have anything against this?" asked Liisa.

Heaika did not respond. Jon understood. Heaika thought it was nonsense. He was just too nice a person to say it out right.

"What do you think then, Liisa?"

"I'm Finnish and Swedish," she said.

"I know that."

"So I have nothing to do with this, actually."

"Don't be silly. That time is past. This concerns all of us, regardless." He saw that Liisa was hesitant. "Everybody can have an opinion," he added.

"It doesn't seem," she hesitated, "so frightening."

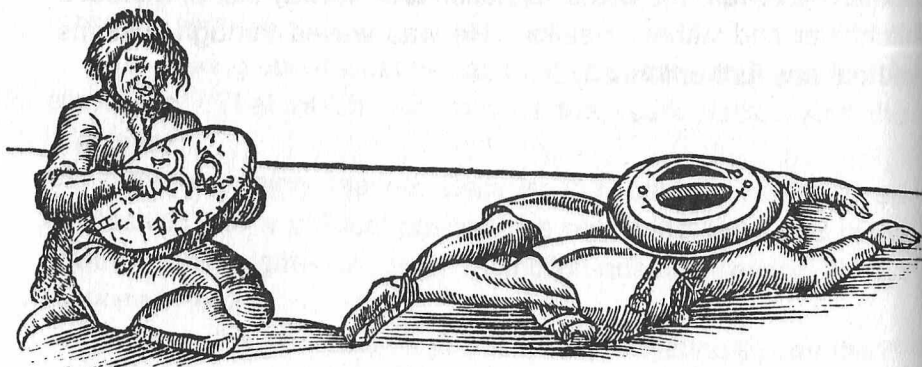
Jon would like to have told them about Akko and her sisters and about the bear spirit. It could have been a deciding argument. But he held back. He accepted that they were not open for this, that the time was still not ripe. How long will it take before mythology and spirit power gain the same consciousness as politics? he asked himself.

"Have you looked for the cave?" he asked Heaika.

He hadn't, and with that question, the conversation died, as if the words that could have carried it further were still not there.

"Have you practiced throwing the lasso?" responded Heaika after a while and somehow balanced the situation because Jon had forgotten all about the lasso.

Jon drove toward the customs station and Norway alone, without a hitchhiker and without Heaika. He was waved through customs without any further formalities.



*The noiade drums self into trance and collapses. With helping spirits, the free soul travels to other worlds. Illustration taken from Schefferus' book.*

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HE HAD, OF course, forgotten to report the reindeer thievery last time he drove through the village. Then, all he could think about was escaping. Now he wanted to take a trip to the sheriff, just to let them know. When it became dark out, he planned to go back to the damned white house. To spy.

On the Norwegian side, the road went down a few long gradual hills. He was traveling down the asphalt in good speed. Behind him came a blue car. He spotted it in his rear view mirror. Jon drove fast, but the blue car was eating up the distance between them. When it came closer, it began flashing the lights. Jon slowed down to the speed limit. Had the police really been waiting as he rushed into Norway?

Now the car was right behind him. A hand waved. Jon pulled over into a parking area and the blue Volvo drove up in front of him. He hoped he had not forgotten his driver's license. Jon opened the glove compartment but did not find the documents.

A black dog jumped out of the car. Then came a knapsack, a rifle, an arm and a man. The man slammed the door behind him. The driver turned the car around and drove back the same direction it had come. The man at the side of the road waved. Then he strode over to Jon, who rolled down his window.

"Would you give me a lift?" asked the man.

It was Abraha.

Jon opened the door. Into the back seat leaped the dog. The rifle and the knapsack were put in place. Then Abraha jumped in.

"How did you find me?"

"Since you didn't find me, I had to find you."

Abraha smiled. Jon started the van. Jon had been looking. He had not found. A stanza from a poem he had written flashed through his mind.

He extended a wing.  
just to discover  
that it would not  
find the way,  
but circled  
around itself.

The valley they drove into widened. Below and to the right, the sun glimmered in water. A river ran into a lake. And at the lower end of the lake, the river let itself out again. The wide tundra rolled down toward the jagged teeth of the coastal mountains.

Wide tundra,  
high collars,  
broken horns,  
burned drums.

A familiar sadness awakened in him in spite of the beautiful sunshine, in spite of the dry, solid asphalt and the vehicle that did not miss a beat. And the fact that it was not the police but Abraha who had found him.

The melancholy carried in it everything that was destroyed. It talked about beliefs and faith that today were called superstition. It talked about tribal ways that today were forgotten.

Who was, today, familiar with the pact between the reindeer and the humans? Who made sacrifices to Sarakka? Or Bajan? Who understood the language of the birds and the flowers? Who missed the drums that the missionaries had burned? Who mourned the shamans who were also burned?

Life was so short and transient that any effort would be useless, in vain. It did not matter what one did or did not do, thought or did not think. It had no consequence.

Abraha pointed toward a herd of reindeer. It floated like a moving forest of horns across the tundra and only brought additional attention to the hollow feeling deep inside his heart.

"I'm the oldest son. My father owned reindeer. But I grew up away from it all," said Jon.

Abraha turned around in his seat, watched the herd until the landscape absorbed it.

"I also had four-legged property once." It sounded like he was laughing. The dog barked.

"Are you laughing?"

"I'm here. They're here. They have to roam around on their own legs while we are rolling safely and comfortably home. Does that make us more fortunate?"

"Does it?" asked Jon.

"Would you trade?" asked Abraha.

"Wouldn't you?" Jon answered with a question.

"I had it. It was good. But then something happened that made me lose it all."

"What do you mean?"

"What I had disappeared."

"How?"

"It met the steel."

"I don't understand."

"The herd was butchered."

"By whom?"

Suddenly Jon became aware of his own voice. Nagging. Direct. Demanding. Hard. Wanting to know everything. Abraha looked at him but did not respond.

Jon had surrendered when Abraha appeared. He had let go of his own power, was leaning on Abraha. Perhaps Abraha needed him more than he needed Abraha?

"Didn't Akko tell you?" asked Abraha finally.

"Tell me what?"

"Why I lost everything."



"No."

"She must have told you about the treasure I found?"

"Yes."

"I also lost it."

"No, you did the right thing," answered Jon.

The road switchbacked down the mountain and disappeared out of view into the gorge. On the left side, the river threw itself down in falls and rapids.

"Do you want to know about it?" asked Abraha.

"What?"

"How I lost everything."

"If you want to tell me."

"I was given the power of seeing," replied Abraha.

"Then you gained something and lost nothing."

"I didn't want this power. But it tormented me to the point where I became wild and mad. This lasted for an entire year. I behaved like a mad man. Could not tolerate either my wife or my children. Walked around in solitude on the tundra. Finally, I was admitted. There I lay and was pumped full of medicine while my family took care of my herd, and it got smaller by the day."

"How did you get out?"

"I said yes to the power."

"Why didn't you say yes in the first place?"

"I fought it because I was afraid. I got sick because I was afraid. I lost everything because I was afraid and did not understand that my own power was small and the spirit power great."

"Yes."

"I thought it was the devil wanting my soul. I thought I was doomed. I had heard this in school and in church and it cost me dearly."

"Yes."

"When I finally got out, she had left me and my herd was gone."

"Completely gone?"

"Completely gone."

"What did you do about it?"

"I didn't report them, didn't seek revenge. I have never been involved with black magic. I always wanted to be involved with the white. That is the purest and highest. Everyone must learn this, for the wisdom is still alive," he said.

"Then how do you get reindeer meat?" asked Jon.

"It comes to me when I need it. I made a pact with the Reindeer God," answered Abraha with a slight laugh as if he didn't think it was necessary to believe what he had just said.

The road ran in sharp turns down through the gorge, and Jon slowed down. The view opened up and they could see all the way to the ocean and the islands far out there.

Then a large bird came sailing on outstretched wings and flew in position next to the car.

"Look," said Jon. Abraha bent toward him and squinted.

"A hawk!" he said.

"It is checking us out."

"With sharp eyes."

The hawk hovered five meters away from the car, floated in the air. The wind ruffled its feathers. Then it moved its tail feathers slightly, turned out over the valley, made a wide arc and was gone.

"It was here in these ravines that it all began and I was younger than you at that time," Abraha told him. "I came here skiing, was an eager hunter. I somehow knew there was a bear hibernating in a ravine nearby. I could feel it. I could see it in the air. Could smell it."

"I understand," replied Jon.

"I searched, wanted to get the better of the giant. That would give me respect. I also believed it would give me some sort of mystical power, like the ones in the old days were empowered, those who killed bears with spears."

"Did you find the den?"

"No. No, I never found the den," said Abraha.

"Did you stop searching?"

"I couldn't forget the quivering feeling of excitement I had had that spring. So I continued to search for the Mosegubbe all summer. Always with the rifle on my back. People began to believe I was crazy the way I ran up and down these ravines."

"Perhaps you got him in the end?"

"No."

"You didn't find him?"

"He found me."

"How?"

"Some reindeer disappeared in the ravine along the river and I went after to investigate. It was an autumn evening. Suddenly, he came out of the earth, rose up on two legs and stood there. He was an excellent target. I positioned the rifle and shot. One shot, two shots, many, but the Mosegubbe stood on his hind legs waving his arms. Then I became frightened, began to run with the bear in hot pursuit. Either I got hit by the paw or I fell and hit my head against something hard, because I fainted. While I lay there, the bear had pushed a stone aside. Beneath it, there was a passage leading to a stone ledge in the mountain. But the incident left me deaf and the doctors could not understand why."

"Did you find anything on this ledge?"

By now they had reached the bottom of the valley where the road curved through cultivated fields. Hay was still hanging on racks to dry. The campground by the river was empty of tents. Jon was scratching his belly.

They met a caravan of three cars and Abraha waved. First came a four-wheel-drive on wide tires, a new model, blue with red and yellow stripes. It was followed by a loaded pickup truck and a station wagon. Lavvo poles were fastened to the bed of the truck. All the vehicles had female drivers.

"It's fall migration," said Abraha.

"Yes," replied Jon.

"Vuoi," said Abraha in his own language.

"Was it an ordinary ledge?"

"Yes, it was a ledge."

"Only a ledge?"

"A place I liked to visit. It became my own secret. I got my hearing back but it took a long time."

"Why?"

"The bear had taken it because I shot at him."

"I understand," nodded Jon.

"On the Fall Equinox, in the middle of the night, I got to meet the ones who had been there before. I learned what had taken place there."

"What?" asked Jon, scratching his stomach again.

"I'll tell you later. A prophecy came from this place."

"Can you tell me about it?" asked Jon.

"One day the wisdom will come back. It will come down from a place beyond the sun and the stars and up from a place beneath stone and moss. I will experience this day. Till then, my job is to keep the fire alive."

Jon whistled softly. Abraha looked at him.

"Did you know about this prophecy?"

"Yes."

"Do you also know the rest?"

"No."

Jon did not ask about the rest of the story. After all, it was amazing enough to hear these words coming from Abraha's mouth. They drove without saying a word for a long time. Jon could hear the dog yelp in his sleep.

"The Mosegubbe had to knock me down because I hunted him. And he took my hearing because I shot. So you can understand how ignorant I was when it all began. I would shoot at everything, even spirits. No one told me what it meant to be between the worlds. No one could help me. But it is a long time ago now, almost forty years," muttered Abraha almost to himself.

Jon scratched his stomach. Had he gotten an insect bite or lice? He unbuttoned his shirt, examined his belly. There was a bright red rash there. He never used to get rashes. Lajla always said that his skin was smooth and soft like a child's, without a pimple or a blackhead. But now he had a rash exactly where Isir had rubbed him and removed the parasite spirits.

They were approaching the small village at the far end of the fjord. Coming up ahead was an intersection.

"Where are you going, by the way?" asked Jon.

"I had to find you so we can carry out what we need to do tonight," said Abraha.

"I have an errand in the village first," said Jon.

"You must come with me. Now."

"Why? What are we doing?" asked Jon.

"We are going up to the ledge in the mountain."

"Why right now?"

"Because today is Fall Equinox," responded Abraha.

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THEY WERE WALKING up along the river in the dark. The ravine was narrow. The waterfalls were roaring. The stones were slippery. But Abraha knew the path. Walked in front of Jon with an agility that was impressive. The man practically flew up the mountainside. Jon groped behind, thinking that the old man was merely showing off.

It was drafty along these mountainsides, a moist draft of pulverized water that was whirled up by air pressure.

As they were steadily reaching higher, Jon could see lights from the houses down by the fjord. He also began to feel his excitement rise, a different kind of excitement than what the darkness and the dizzying height produced. They were on their way to a place that was part of a legend. Then he understood that Abraha did not run like a mountain goat just to impress him, but because he was feeling the same kind of excitement and that gave strength to the body.

Abraha left the path, hiked along a ridge out toward the steep cliffs. Here they looked straight into the mountain wall on the opposite side of the river. Heather and dwarf birch were growing along the path and stones had fallen from above.

They stepped out on a plateau in the dark. It was sloping downward. Without stopping, without saying anything nor hesitating, Abraha walked straight over to a low stone and pulled it aside. Then he disappeared down into the hole, was swallowed by the earth.

Excited, Jon stuck his foot down into the black hole and felt around. His foot found a hold. Jon let himself glide down, found another foothold. He realized steps were there and that people had walked down into the narrow opening in the dark many, many times before him. Finally, he felt level ground beneath his feet. He was standing inside a cave. In front of him was a light. He walked toward it. Abraha was busy lighting a fire. They were out on a terrace in the mountain. Above them was a roof of stone. The



opening overlooked the ravine. The river and the waterfalls foamed below them, but the roar from the waterfalls was muffled to a low, low hum.

In the middle of the terrace stood a strange stone.

"You will be shown anything you ask to see when you sit next to it," said Abraha.

Behind the stone, a ledge bored into the mountain. Jon crawled into it. It grew narrower and narrower until all he could do was inch his way forward on his stomach.

He poked his head through the opening, an oval hole in the mountainside itself. Below, he saw the night contours of the valley, the village and the ocean further out. But the height made him dizzy.

The fire turned to embers.

"This is the midnight hour. Sit down by the stone," said Abraha.

Feeling self-conscious, Jon walked over to the stone and sat down with his legs crossed, trying to get into the right mood. After a while, he became tired. It felt like the entire mountain was weighing him down with its sleep. He wanted to stay awake.

He asked to see the drum.

A moving horn became visible. He was not completely sure what was taking place but felt the stone opening up. Suddenly, his soul was sucked out of his body, sucked through the opening of the cave and hurled through the hole in the mountain wall. Just as he was shot out of the hole and soared above the precipice, he became heavy with the fear of falling. But then he noticed he was lighter than air, that he could fly. The moving light in the stone was the powerful sun disc, surrounded by golden rays. One of the rays shot way out. On it, he rode to the sun and beyond it. He emerged from a hole at the bottom of a lake, swam through the water without getting wet. Then he pierced through the surface membrane and reached the land beyond.

It was getting light by the time he came back into his body. Abraha had made a bed for him at the head of the cave. There he glided into sleep like a diver through water. When he woke up, it was afternoon.

"Did your question get answered?" asked Abraha. "It is the custom to share."

Jon told him about the man who had met him when he emerged from the lake.

"What could he show you?"

"How to make a drum and what the symbols meant?"

Abraha nodded.

"He brought me into a large lavvo where the drum masters worked. First, I was shown the sign of the Mosegubbe's power. Then I was shown many other figures, power signs and healing symbols."

"Did you travel around?"

"This was a land of high plains, a warrior land with high mountains at the horizon. There were many people there, warriors and nomads. They did what they loved the most in life. The Indians rode on buffalo hunts. The Samis branded their reindeer herds."

"The wisdom is being passed down," said Abraha.

"How long was I gone?"

"Several hours."

"It felt like a few brief moments, perhaps ten minutes."

"Dreamtime is timeless. There everything is beyond time and space."

"Was it you who joiked?"

"Yes. That's the way it has to be."

"What would have happened if you had not been here to joik?"

"I was here. I did joik. I followed the rules. If the rules are not followed, it could be disastrous."

"How?"

"The free spirit could lose its way back, travel in the opposite direction. Or get caught in a mountain crack or under a tree root."



"What happens then?"

"Then the cord is broken."

"What does that mean?"

"They call it death."

"What kind of place is this? You promised to tell me."

"In this place, they trained shamans in the old days. Here they learned about spirits and were tested."

"What kind of tests?"

"An apprentice would sit with an initiated shaman down there in the cave. The noaide called on the spirits. If the apprentice couldn't see them or feel them when they came, he would fail. If he was aware of the spirits as they passed by, he would pass the test and could begin to practice."

"Did they journey like I did?"

"Here they learned to journey. And they journeyed both to the Upper and the Lower world and also to different places on the Planet. Some were gone for several days, went to Iceland or Italy. There were even those who claimed that nothing worldly was unfamiliar to them on this earth. They knew both the joys and sorrows of the black, red, yellow and white people. They had journeyed all over the world."

"Spirit journeys?"

"Yes."

"But didn't they need drums for this?"

"I myself have never used a drum," said Abraha.

"But they used drums."

"Yes," replied Abraha. "Do you remember the prophecy I told you about?"

"Yes."

"I didn't tell you everything. It was said that the drum will come down from the sun. I would experience holding the drum in my hands before my time was up. But it was someone else who would be taught the art of using it."

"When did you hear these prophecies?"

"I was younger than you are now."

Again, Abraha lit a fire. He fried meat. They ate. Jon felt awake in a new way.

On the back wall of the cave was something that caught his eye. He examined it closer, scraped away moss and lichen. Then an oval-shaped drawing appeared.

Suddenly, he understood what it was. He had discovered a carving of a drum. The surface was divided into three parts and each part was full of symbols.

"I have been here for thirty years without discovering this," stated Abraha as Jon pointed out the different figures.

When they came out of the tunnel, were back up on the plateau, the sun was shining in through the cleft in the mountain. They pushed the stone in place and sat down, enjoying the sun and the view. The mountain was large, open and friendly. Different from last night.

"There is much more to learn, isn't there?" asked Jon.

"Now you know the most important, the openings."

Jon nodded.

"One day I'll have a drum myself."

"Hope that day will come soon," replied Abraha. "On that day, I know what will happen to me."

Abraha's voice sounded happy, even though he talked about death or the passing on.

"The wisdom is being handed down," he added.

"It is strange that so many have forgotten," said Jon.

"That's the way it is. But I wouldn't let it bother me. You know, the shamans used to play together here. Here they would lie and gather energy and power from the sun. They would also give each other rubs."

"Rub each other?"

"You don't believe the shamans suffered and fasted all the time, do you? Oh no, that's not how it was. They played with each other,

and this is how they learned rubbing and stroking and sucking. They had to heal others and, therefore, they themselves had to be healthy. There were also women shamans."

Abraha and Jon sat on opposite sides of the flat stone. Jon could see before him how they once rolled out their reindeer hides here, how they had bathed in the sun and enjoyed themselves. They had massaged each other, sucked creatures out of each other's bodies, taught each other joiks and incantations and tested the bear power.

"Do you want to arm-wrestle?" asked Jon suddenly.

So they began to arm-wrestle. The old man was tough and strong and Jon let him win. Later they wrestled, tried to bring each other out of balance. They rolled around in the moss in the mountains, panted and sweated.

Suddenly Abraha twisted around and pinned Jon underneath him with a firm grip.

"Is there enough strength left in this old body to hold you down?"

No matter how hard Jon tried, he could not get loose. Abraha smiled and was in a cheerful mood on top of him. He began to rub his thigh up against Jon's groin and it could not be misunderstood. Jon didn't like it. But suddenly he received help from the bear. He slid out of the grip and was free.

They sat in the sun, warm, dizzy and dreamy. Jon took his shirt off. He wanted to give the rash some sun. But during the night it had dried up and only a few bumps were left on his skin. The pain in his shoulder was also gone.

"Aren't you going to undress completely?" asked Abraha.

"Why?"

"So I can see if the branch still stands."

"Was that part of it too?" smiled Jon.

"The shamans had to be able to help impotent men and women unable to conceive."

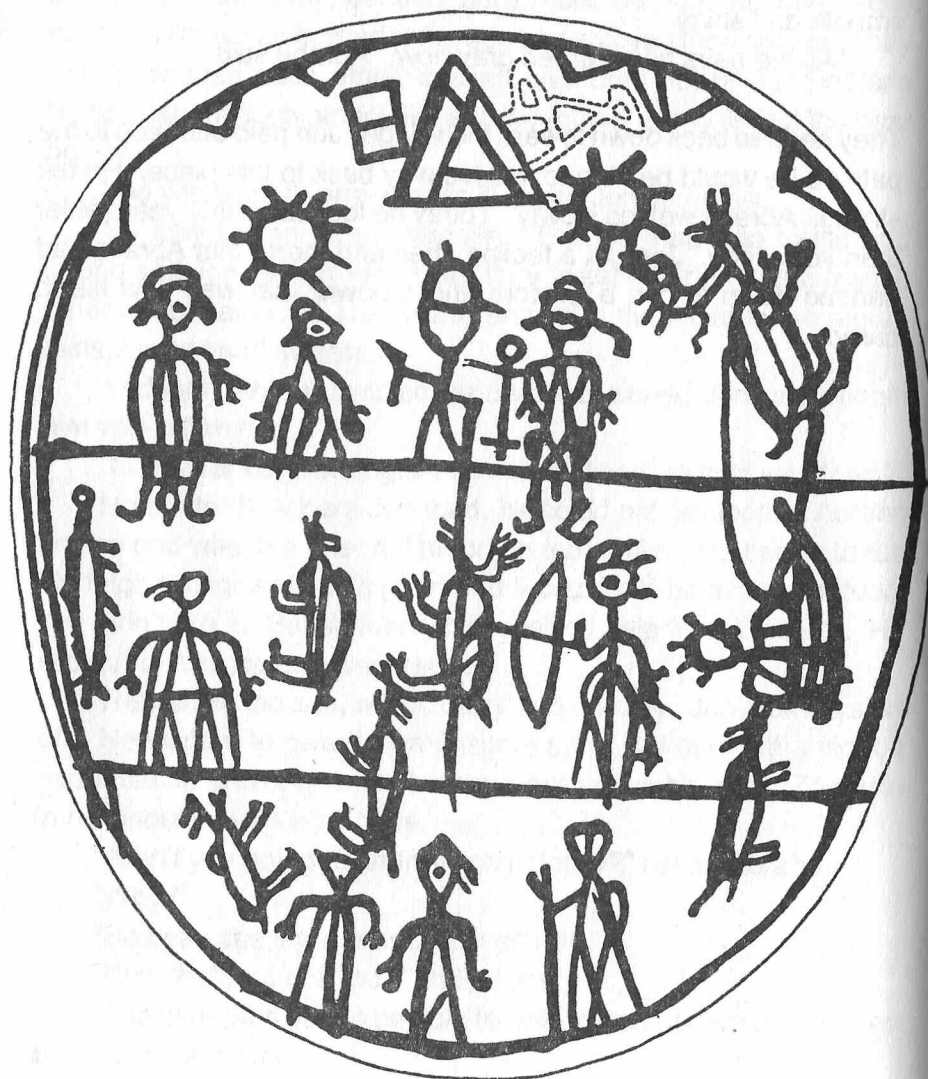
"Mine stands where it should. But it could use some stroking right now because it has been awhile."

"You are still active and not frail and old as this carcass here."

Abraha got up on his knees. He pointed to his organ. The shaft was soft and the skin wrinkled. The head was darker in color than his, which was light, light violet like a reindeer calf's tongue but still smooth and shiny.

"All the hairs have turned gray now," Abraha said.

They headed back down toward the village. Jon paid attention to the path so he would be able to find his way back to this place. He felt strong. Abraha walked slowly. Today he looked twenty years older than yesterday. Jon got a feeling, then and there, that Abraha had handed down to him a wisdom and a power that was now his to carry.



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JON HAD TO put the car in second gear to get up the steep incline to the highway. From above, the shiny blue four-wheel-drive they had met the day before appeared. He stopped. The woman was driving. Next to her a man was sitting. Abraha waved and the man waved back. A light show of brake lights and blinkers were turned on.

They sat down on an outcrop above the road.

"We came back to look for a herd that got lost," the man told them.

"I see," replied Abraha.

"They disappeared down the canyon. You didn't happen to see them?"

"We didn't see any reindeer."

"But can you see them with the third eye?" asked the man with a smile.

Abraha became silent, was poking with a stick in the pine needles on the ground.

"They are grazing peacefully up a canyon. Perhaps fifty animals."

"There were about that many."

"Yes."

"Are they on this side of the road or have they crossed the road?" asked the man.

"They didn't cross the road," answered Abraha.

The man took a pair of binoculars from his breast pocket, began scanning into the canyons, into the ravines and up the hillsides. Then he placed the binoculars back into a leather case.

"Where are you coming from?" he asked.

Abraha pointed toward the ravine.

"What's with this ravine? Even Ruth won't tell me what it is. I have seen the Grandfather Stone but no one ever tells me anything more about the ravine here."

"Well...", Abraha stared into space.

"Did you stay up there last night?" asked Ruth.

"Yes. We stopped at home before we came up here."

"And who is that guy you are with?" the man asked.

"My name is Jon. I'm interested in the old wisdom. That's how I met Antti."

"So you are one of them," said the man.

"Do you know of someone around here with a noaide-drum?" asked Jon.

"They rotted in the earth a long time ago. And you shall know they were the tools of the devil. They sent diseases to humans and animals alike, either through the air, through water or even through the earth. One had to be careful everywhere in those days; there was nowhere safe. The devilry ruled everywhere. We shouldn't be talking about this or the spirits will wake up even here under our asses," he said.

"Where is the Grandfather Stone?" asked Jon.

"Not too far from here," responded Ruth. "I have many stories to tell about it if you are interested. I talked, for several days, to someone from the Sami Institute. But when they were going to listen to what I had told them, the recorder hadn't functioned properly, so I had to repeat everything."

"It was a junky recorder they came with," said the man.

"But now they have it on tape."

"Did you tell them about the Grandfather Stone?" asked Abraha.

"Yes."

"Have you been there?" Abraha seemed surprised.

"No, but I've heard enough about it."

"I didn't think you were interested in it," said Abraha.

"It was there my grandfather received his reindeer luck," she replied.

"Perhaps we ought to go there now," said her husband with a grin.

"What did you tell them about it?" continued Abraha.

"That Grandfather's white reindeer herd came from there. He got the herd by throwing a knife over the stone."

"You ought to go there, Antti, and take a lot of knives with you when you go," teased her husband.

"Hush up, don't be silly, Aslat," Ruth quickly added.

"In my opinion, receiving reindeer luck from a stone is old superstition. It was how they explained things in the old days. Today, everyone knows that reindeer can't come out of stones." Aslat looked at Jon and continued:

"In the old days, they used the drum to scare people off and to gain silver and property. They paid themselves well. Besides, it created nothing but discord. One noaide would threaten to eat the other and so it carried on and never stopped. And I have my own explanation about the visions people had. It happened because people would party and drink for weeks at an end. They drank poor quality alcohol and fooled around. When they came to after a spell, they had delirium and hangovers. They saw both the boogie man and fate's own reindeer bull. Then they had to go and see someone who had gotten the reputation of being a healer, to get calmed down. That's all it was."

"Much goes on between heaven and earth," said Jon diplomatically.

"Now it is peaceful here and we can work," said Aslat. "But you, stranger, haven't I seen you before? Tell me if I'm wrong, but don't you write for a newspaper in Oslo?"

"Yes."

"Because I have a story that ought to get printed in the paper."

"I'm not working now."

"We could use some help. The Army needs more space and we can't afford to keep paying lawyers. It doesn't look like we are making much headway anyway."



"Then things are not so peaceful after all," said Abraha.

"The State is behind this."

"This is the real discord. The State takes a little here and a little there and the few districts that are not affected keep quiet so they won't rock the boat till the day comes when the development catches up with them. This is actually far from peace. Everyone grabbing as much as possible for himself."

"You certainly don't need to speak up for the reindeer industry, you who do not even own a single animal, but who always somehow seems to have reindeer meat between your teeth," said Aslat.

"If the big companies didn't have to get bigger and have to eat the small ones in the process, there would be room enough for everyone. Then there would be peace in the communities. And we could stand together against outside pressure. Oh no, my good man, one does not create peace by stepping on others."

"A person must be strong to get to the top," answered Aslat curtly.

A car came toward them, ate its way up the hills, came closer and passed. It disappeared behind the crest of a hill. Aslat rolled a cigarette, lit it and smoked. It always seemed like cars disappeared faster than they appeared. The sun broke through the clouds. The steep mountainsides shone like bronze. High up there somewhere, Jon thought he could see the terrace, but he could just as well mistake it for another among all the ledges and terraces in these mountain.

"I have heard about the Grandfather Stone. It's famous. Can you see it from here?" asked Jon.

"It's all the way up in the mountains," said Ruth.

"I thought it was in this ravine."

"No, it stands by a pass above the lake. The person who initiated the stone sat there on a reindeer hide the entire time the herd was moving by. They say he dressed in his finest clothes. Later everyone else had to do the same. They had to remove their

hats and walk by bare-headed. He had real reindeer luck. It could take the herd three days to pass and during that time, no one could lure him away from the stone where he was sitting."

"He probably rested once in a while, the old fellow," said Aslat.

"He made offerings and prayed," continued Ruth.

"To whom?"

"I don't know. I haven't been there."

"Perhaps he had a pact with the black one."

"He had white reindeer, the whitest herd around," Ruth told them.

"And this was your grandfather?"

"It was his father, wasn't it, Antti?" asked Ruth.

"It was Grandfather's father's father, and he never threatened anyone or sought revenge. And if any of his hired men stole reindeer, he would fire them. He gave to those who had little."

"This is probably as true as the stories about the silver and gold treasure." Aslat stubbed out his cigarette and stood up. He got out his binoculars, scanned the hillsides and the canyons. Jon wanted to borrow them to look for the ledge in the mountain.

"I'm glad I never began to make offerings because Birro is insatiable and demands more and more. In the end, one is left with nothing, and no one can convince me that at that point you will receive another reindeer herd from a stone." He strode across the road. Aslat looked into Jon's vehicle, walked behind it. Jon could hear the stream of urine against the gravel.

"When I was a little girl, I got a magic stone from my grandfather. I was supposed to keep it till I grew up. Then I was to make three wishes, and the stone would make them come true. But I couldn't wait till I grew up and I made my wishes while I was still younger than a teenager," Ruth told them when her husband was out of sight.

"What happened?" asked Abraha.

"I received what I asked for. I got a friend in the woods. He came to me when I called on him. We played together and ate together. He was my best friend. He had no parents. I felt sorry for

him, used to take food to him. Later, we became lovers. No one else knew about it and he was so handsome. I thought he was invisible to anyone else, that only I could see him. But Papa spied on us. I got a spanking and later I threw the stone away. I've never told this to anyone before."

"What did the stone look like?"

"It was clear, hexagonal and with a pointed tip."

Aslat came out on the road again.

"It's about time to leave," he said, walked toward the truck. Ruth nodded.

The man opened the door and jumped in.

"You must not be angry with him or cast evil on him," said Ruth to Abraha when Aslat was out of sight.

"You know what I think of him," responded Abraha.

"But he is a good mountain man," she said.

Abraha was silent.

"Something else happened," she began.

Then the man honked the horn. Ruth stood up, hesitated.

"It isn't true what I said when I told you I haven't been by the Grandfather Stone. Because when I grew up, I regretted that I had thrown the magic stone away. So I hiked up to the pass once and sat down by the stone. It even began to rain. I was cold. Nothing happened. I was about to go home. But, for some reason or other, I stayed.

Ruth looked over toward the truck as if she expected to be interrupted by more honking.

"Then the stone opened. First, a white eagle flew out and disappeared. Then came a large white reindeer and a calf. A wolf hunted them. The bull and the wolf fought. The bull threw the wolf through the air. In the meantime, the calf ran away, down from the mountains to the coast. But it was the calf the wolf wanted. It picked up its trail and followed. In the end, it caught up with the calf, was ready to attack. But then, a brown bear appeared and swept the wolf off

its feet. It picked the calf up in its paws and carried it back up on the tundra. When they got there, the calf was no longer a calf."

"What was it?"

"It was a drum."

"A noaide-drum?"

"Yes."

"And the old bull, what happened to him?" asked Abraha.

"He lost his horns."

"And the wolf?"

"It died."

"What happened to the eagle?"

"It would return when the prophecy was about to be fulfilled."

"Do you remember the prophecy we heard as children, about the wisdom returning?" asked Abraha.

"This is the rest of the story. Today I saw the white eagle. It flew above Saanen," she said.

The blue truck signaled and turned out on the road. The wide tires grabbed the asphalt. It disappeared into the afternoon sky. In a quivering haze of diesel smoke against the diagonal rays of the sun, Jon turned onto the road and followed.

"Was that your sister?"

"Yes."

"And you love your brother-in-law?"

"He is not from here. He came from outside and married her. That's when my luck ran out. Now he owns everything."

"Your luck ran out? Do you mean that?"

"When I started school, I was the first one who learned to write. We had essay competitions. One time I had written a whole page. The teacher praised me and called me an author. I was mobbed for it, so I stopped writing."

"That's a shame," replied Jon.

"I could have been a teacher. Or a minister. Had a career," he said with a slight smile.

"Perhaps not a minister," said Jon.

"Probably not a minister," answered Abraha.

"Or perhaps exactly a minister."

"Ruth received a stone. I received the shaman's arrow. From my grandfather. I have tried different professions but I'm not good at anything except seeing. I see with the third eye, like Aslat said. Every time I have tried a new profession, the spirits have stopped me."

"Did you see the herd he was asking about?"

"I saw it. But the first place the man will look is not where I saw it, but in the ravine we came from."

"Why?"

"Didn't you notice how he examined your car? He was looking for poached meat, if you ask me."

"You got a noaide arrow inside you. Do you know what I got?"

"No."

"A sign came loose from a noaide-drum and shot into me."

"What sign?"

"The Sun sign."

They turned right at the intersection, drove through a pine thicket down to the fjord. And right by the sheriff's office once more. Now it was after hours. In the morning he would make the trip.

On the left side lay the fjord, clear and calm. The road ran next to it. Just past the gas station, they turned right.

First, they passed the large new house. Two dogs came out barking. This was where Aslat and Ruth lived. The blue four-wheel-drive was parked in front of the house. Two scooters and a four-wheel ATV were standing by the storehouse.

Further up, the road narrowed, was washboardy and full of ruts. It was already getting dark when they parked outside the small weathered house. The old dog came lumbering over, jumped up on Abraha once, sniffed Jon. Then he ambled after Abraha toward the door.

Jon walked behind the house to take a leak. Then he discovered something he had failed to notice yesterday.

Abraha was squatting in front of the stove, making a fire, when Jon came in.

"So you have a car," said Jon.

"Yes, that's my car." Abraha got out the matches.

"I see."

"I noticed that my license plate number was written on your sun visor." Abraha lit the match.

"Yes."

"What action was finally taken in this case?" Abraha looked at Jon.

"I bet you would like to know."

Abraha nodded. The flame ate its way up the thin matchstick till Abraha burned his fingers.

"Well?" Abraha opened the box and took out another match.

"Did I really forget to tell you about it?" said Jon.



▼▼▼

JON WOKE UP from a hazy dream. He was lying on a sofa in the living room. The door to the kitchen was open. There the dog was sleeping in a corner. Abraha was also asleep.

Jon was tossing and turning awhile before he fell asleep again. Then the dream returned. He flew out of the sleep like a hare out of the bushes with a badger in pursuit.

With a pounding heart, he stood on the floor. It was dark in the room and dark outside and a subterranean stillness prevailed. He could hear something outside. Paws padded around the house. Claws scraped against the front door and a snout sniffed in the door crack.

Abraha woke him up. It felt like he had only slept for a moment. All he wanted to do was to drift back into sleep's timelessness but something in the way Abraha looked at him made him sit up. His body was stiff and cold as he put his clothes on. Even the dog growled from under the table when he sat down for coffee.

"Morning is such a precious time," remarked Jon. But the dog kept growling and Abraha was staring into his coffee cup.

Jon wanted to get the conversation going and recreate the mood from last night because last night the house had been alive and full of laughter. Now it felt like the rooms and those who lived there had shriveled up from coldness and hostility. The amusing story about how he repeatedly had forgotten to report the reindeer thievery to the police had been great entertainment.

"I removed it from your mind," Abraha had told him as they chewed the chunks from the meat pot.

Now Jon couldn't stand the sight of these knuckles. He pushed them on the floor. Any normal dog would have sunk its teeth into these delicacies, but this specimen growled even more. Abraha bent



down. He collected the bones on a dish as if this were valuable food or something even more precious.

"Why are you doing this?" asked Jon and nodded toward the knuckles.

"Are you hungry?" responded Abraha, wiped off the table and set out bread and butter.

"What are you going to do with those scraps?"

"That's all I have left."

"What do you mean? They are only knuckles."

"New meat can grow on them."

Suddenly Jon felt the eeriness of the night when an animal was scratching at the door.

"Did you notice anything strange last night?" he asked.

"You must not let yourself be fooled when you carry out your mission. You must talk to Jov. You must use your third eye."

"You know Jov?"

"You are still not cunning enough. You believe in moral right. He who is hunting you follows different rules. He could have gone through windows and walls if the dog and I hadn't been here. You must show that you are Banzo. You must employ the stratagem of the tribe and not just that, but use all the cleverness and power of the warrior people. A smile can be a knife."

"Can't you come with me?"

"My battles are fought. Now you have to fight yours. That is according to the rules. To the prophecy."

"Damn it. There the calf was chased by the wolf."

"The wolf is on the track."

"What are you talking about? We live in the twentieth century. There aren't any wolves left."

"Today, there are more wolves than ever. And the tribal warriors have forgotten how to kill the wolves. The tribal warriors are full of excuses. They just complain, never fight. The wolves are sneaking about in the mountains. They slink around houses and scratch on doors. Go," he said suddenly.

"Go?"

"Now."

Suddenly Jon understood. It was time to leave. He was not sure where he was heading. He had to find the drum. But the path was still not clear to him.

He swallowed the bread, packed up his things and prepared to leave.

"I was seeing things last night. I know the time has come. The wolves are hunting in the mountains."

"Are the wolf spirits that dangerous?"

"They can snap up the souls that remember the wisdom. They will hunt until the last one is gone. Remember that."

"Yes."

"Follow the Path of the Sun. Once upon a time, a noaide pulled the sun into a lavvo. The whole world was left in darkness while he and his people had sunlight twenty-four hours a day. Not until Jov untied the knots did the sun return to its proper course."

"But can't Jov tackle the wolf spirits?"

"We must do that ourselves."

"Why?"

"To get back in touch with our own abilities and powers. At one time, everyone came here for advice. Kings and chiefs sent their sons and daughters here to learn. The army chiefs sought advice from the seers of the Sun Daughter's tribe before they went into battle. Everyone treated us with respect. But then we began to forget. Banzo was a great chief. He resisted. Banzo was the protector of the power. Banzo is with Jov now. The last Sun-drum belonged to Banzo. It isn't my job to bring it back. I have to hand down the knowledge about the openings. You are of Banzo's lineage. It's your job to bring the drum back. The time has come. Go. Go after the drum."

"Yes."

"You have to make amends for the past."

"I have to do what?"

"The oppression of the past."

"You mean what they did to us?"

"Yes," answered Abraha.

"I can manage that."

"But also for what we have done to ourselves and the wisdom by forgetting it, rejecting it."

"That would be more difficult."

"But it is the most important."

"That's my weakest side. I have lived too many years outside the tribe."

"That's why you are the strongest."

"I am?" asked Jon.

"If you become frightened, send it away. Send it out into the ocean. Do the same if you get tired. Let the bear eat your weakness. And beware of the woman," said Abraha.

"She is friendly. All she does is sew. It is he who is the evil one."

It was cold in the van. A heavy and wet fog seeped in from the ocean. Jon got goosebumps and the small capillary veins under the surface of the skin were closed off. His hands turned cold and white like a corpse.

He needed to break loose from the somber mood that was haunting him from the night before and also that morning. All this talk about Banzo and prophecies and wolves. He was driving a good vehicle on a wide, paved road. Even the fog was lifting. Out there, a boat chugged along, leaving a long wake behind. An airplane came into view, high above him. But no wolves were in sight.

The van turned onto a side road that led to the house where the man with the drum lived. If there was something called automatic writing, there was also something called automatic driving.

As he drove further and further into the narrow canyon, he understood that it was a training he had gone through the last few days. Now only the final exam remained. He saw his goal clearly in

front of him. The goal of this journey was wrapped up in a black cloth in a chest on the second story of a small white house. He wanted that drum. The man would not give it up willingly. A battle was inevitable.

Jon geared down where the hills began.

The heater sent a warm wind out into the compartment. The warmth pricked his cheeks and ears, then it spread to his feet and hands. Jon felt power gathering in his body. He made fists and boxed around inside the van. He joiked while the vehicle worked in third gear, up the hills and around the curves, toward its goal.

We belong to a Western branch  
of an Eastern tribe in the North.  
On these plains, by these  
fjords and mountains and under double  
starry skies is our home.  
Into this, Europe has marched  
with crosses, kings, war and chaos.

"The oppression of the past."

"You mean what they did to us?"

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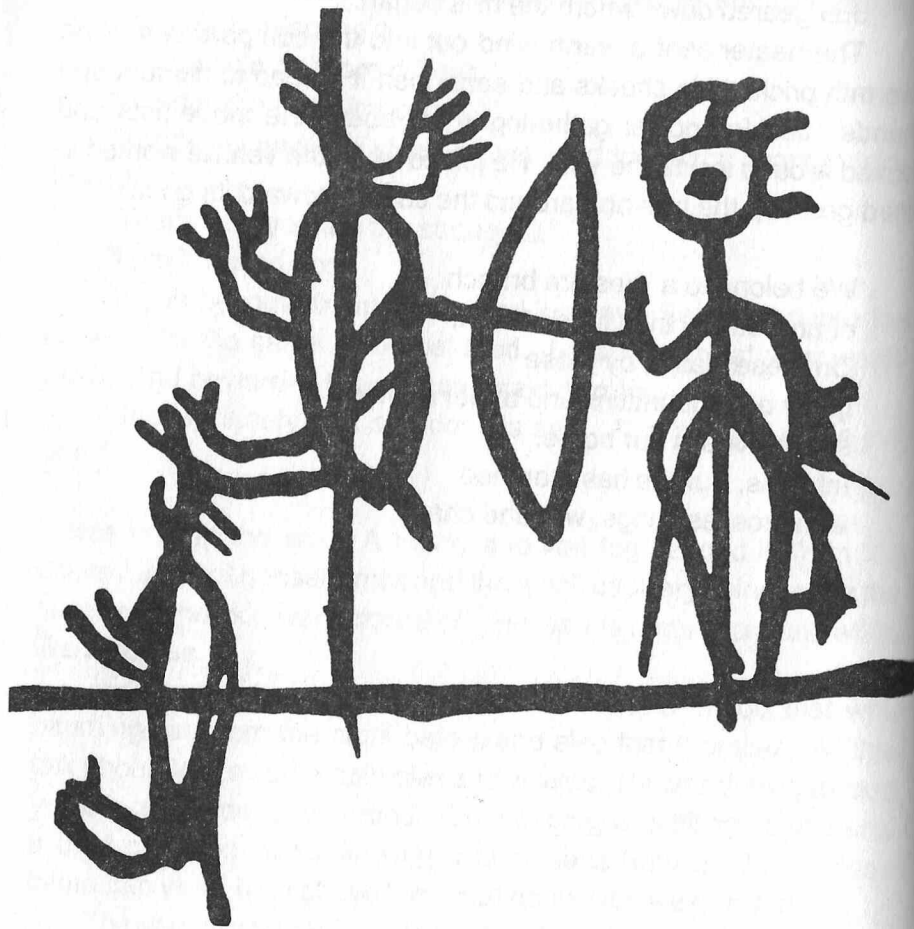
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JON PARKED BELOW the house just like the last time.

He brought out the knapsack with the sleeping bag. Then the lasso caught his eye. He slipped the coiled lasso over his head and under one arm. The small knapsack could easily be carried on top of the rope. The crystal lay in his pocket, the big knife was hanging from his belt. His plan was to hike up on the hillside, watch the house from there. He found a path between the trees. However, it turned the opposite direction from where he was going. So he left it. After a few strides, a big shadow fell on him from above. He threw himself down, turned to see what it was. An owl sailed silently through the pines and disappeared. Once before, he had been charged by an owl in broad daylight. But that was in late spring. Then the owl had eggs or small babies and was defending her nest. But now the young ones were able to fly and a two-legged creature should not be a threat.

He walked on.

Then he spotted the owl again. It came gliding silently in a large arc through the trees. The owl aimed for him, passed right above his head. What a master flier it was. It turned around this time and came and sat in the top of a pine and followed him with keen eyes. Jon took a few steps forward. Immediately, the owl let itself down from the tree, glided quickly and silently toward him. Jon dived to the ground. But the bird's talons brushed against his shoulder and tore a hole in his jean jacket. Once again, it landed in the pine and watched him.

Well, this was undoubtedly a sign.

It was an owl that had linked him up with Abraha in the first place. So he was not headed the right direction.



Jon found his way back to the path. It led up into the mountains but opposite to where the house stood. The mountain grew steeper and steeper so after a while he had to climb on all fours.

Jon rested on an outcrop. He could not see the house. This was reassuring. Then no one could see him either, he thought with a shiver.

Above him, a ledge cut into the large, smooth, sloping stone. It looked promising. Perhaps he could get the necessary view from there. Jon began to explore the ledge.

Ask Jov's advice, Abraha had said? But where was Jov?

Then he discovered the crevice.

Jon walked inside the small opening in the mountain, a cleft that had been created by movement in the stone about fifteen or twenty thousand years ago. The opening was completely symmetrical and the span from the bottom where he walked to the top was perhaps one hundred meters or more. At that distance, the daylight faded into thin rays that looked distorted, like sunlight in water. Further in, the mountain closed in above him. It became very dark. He lit a match. The cave sloped down in front of him. He took a few steps forward. The match burned out and he lit another. It burned with a clear and silent flame. After a while, he reached the bottom of the cave. The room at the far end had a concave floor like a bear's den after a long winter's sleep.

Jon rolled out the sleeping bag, sat down on top of it. Out there in front of him, he could vaguely see a dancing ray of light. It did not reach all the way to the bottom but was swallowed, on the way, by darkness. Not a breath of air against his skin. Not a sound to be heard. Only his breath, his heart and the blood that ran through his veins were audible. This was the silence of the inner earth.

The good took care of itself. But one must constantly beware of the evil. He remembered the warning the hitchhiker had given him when he was preparing himself to meet the man whose name he still did not know.

He took the crystal out of his pocket, touched the six smooth, clear sides and then the hexagonal pyramid-shaped point.

It suddenly began to vibrate. The little stone opened up and grew, swallowed him into the light that came from a sun within it.

There stood Jov with the drum.

He was leading the warriors.

He was clad in a Norwegian sweater and wore a starhat on his head.

Jov was a chief. The warriors stood in silence behind him, with faces shining with determination and power.

Then Jov held out the drum. Someone took it, put it away. This person came back with a spear that Jov accepted. The shaft of the spear was thick and strong, the blade pointed. Two feathers were tied to the shaft, up near the spear-head. Jov, the drum-shaman, he who was sending the wisdom back, had armed himself, was now a warrior.

There was a ceremony to prepare Jov for his new mission.

"Go that way but stay hidden," said Jov. He pointed with the spear so the feathers danced. Jon understood and nodded because Jov had pointed down toward the house and the driveway. The house was visible to them even though they were sitting deep inside the mountain. His instructions were clear. He did not know why this was the correct way. Jov knew.

"Yes," replied Jon.

"It is your drum. Now the time has come for you to reclaim it," said Jov.

The crystal locked its powers behind the smooth hard surface. Jon came back into his body. It was an amazing stone. Quartz crystals were the densest substance in nature next to diamonds, he had read. Crystals were used in modern communications from radio to computers. The crystal had shared one of its secrets with Jon.

He was happy, reassured. The wisdom was coming back.

The drum belonged to him, Jov had said. That was the last and most important thing he needed to know before he threw himself into battle.

Jon had not slept many hours the night before. He did not feel rested. He slipped into the sleeping bag like a bear into its winter den.

When he came out on the mountain plateau again, it was late afternoon. Down in the floor of the valley, shadows were collecting like cloudy water at the bottom of a pan. He hurried down toward the van, toward the white house and toward the inevitable confrontation.

When he came down, there was still light above on the peaks. He recognized this mountainside. He had just been where he had seen the sun shine that night Lajla and he came this way for the first time.

In the loft above the house, the man was walking back and forth. He had lit candles when it grew dark. On the table lay the drum. Because of its bowl shape, it was tilting to one side. All the figures on the skin glowed in a deep red color in the half-light. He had studied them over and over again in order to figure out what they meant. Two lines were once drawn across the skin and they separated the surface and the figures into three areas.

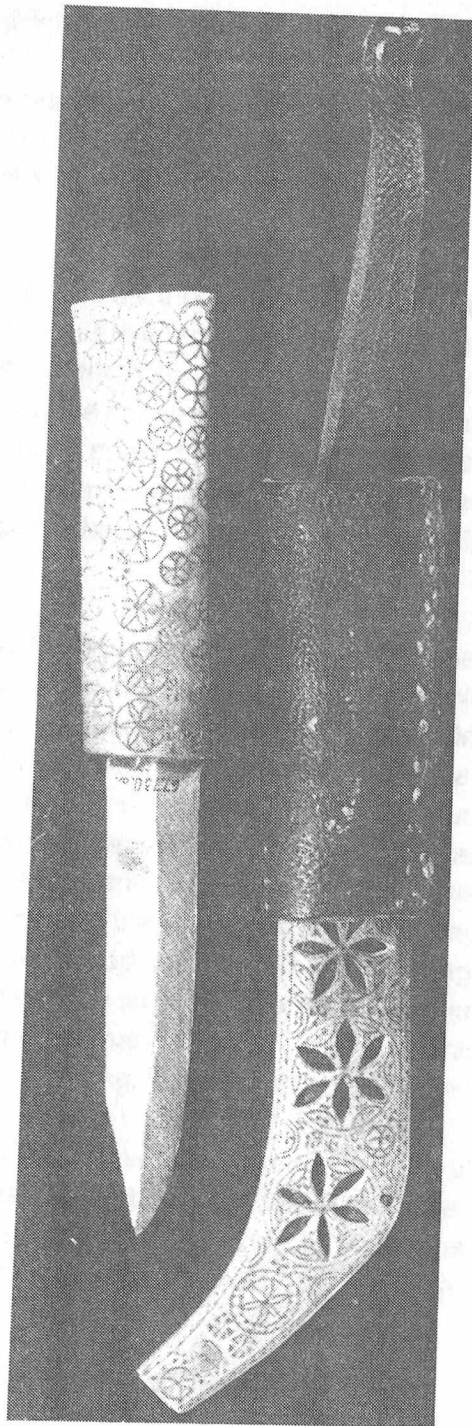
He had been using the drum that day and all day the day before. He had worked hard, had given the wolf new strength.

Jon did not see the large grayish-white wolf that now appeared on the ledge where he had just been. It followed his tracks into the cave, stood there sniffing. Then it trotted back out with its nose on the trail.

The wolf looked strangely deformed with its abnormally large head, large chest, small body and thin legs. The tail was tucked between its legs. It seemed nervous. It was startled by sudden noises and strange smells. Its movements were jerky as if it were

having problems with its coordination due to the unproportional way it was built.

When the smell of its prey became fresher and sharper in its nose, it grew more eager, braver.



*Knife and sheath. Reindeer horn.*

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JON THREW THE knapsack and the sleeping bag back into the van but kept the lasso across his shoulder. Then and there, it suddenly became important to him in a different way. Then and there, he also fully understood the message from the drum. He removed his big knife and fetched the tribal knife from his bag. This was his weapon. On the sheath, a bear, a reindeer and a feather were carved. The lasso, the knife and the crystal gave him identity, confidence.

The shadows had grown denser. He walked out on the main road, up the hills toward the house he was going to visit. Jov, his helper, had laid the drum down and had picked up a spear. Jov had armed himself and that could only mean one thing, battle.

The wisdom comes down  
from a place  
beyond the sun and the stars

and up  
from a place  
beneath stone and moss.

He felt awake, focused. Fortunately, he did not meet a single car. No dog barked to announce his arrival.

A people without a past  
is a people without a future.

His eyes adjusted to the dark. Below lay the valley. In the distance, the fjord. Above him and above the road grew pine trees, all the way to the timberline. Beyond it the mountains towered.



Then he noticed an eye, a groove in the trunk of a pine tree. Around the eye, a face took shape. Was he being placed under a spell? Was someone using their powers on him? The face made a grimace, grinned. Well, he grinned back, stuck his tongue out. Then the tree trunk opened and a human being came into view, a beautiful, completely naked man, but much smaller than himself.

"Do you know where you are going?" asked the little man.

Jon stopped.

"You need to know. You are walking in between the worlds now," said the man.

With Christian royal jealousy

The missionaries burned

drums, shamans and

sacred objects in nature.

Yes, he was on fire. It had all begun a long time ago. It had taken him all this way. It was as if his past were burning. A past that would never go away but now the weight of it abated. The fire made him light, gave him energy. He felt the threads of fate being burned, the same threads that the shamans sometimes had to bite through so a sick person could get rid of the cord of the disease and heal. This was not like burning in hell. It was a fire that set him free.

He had seen a drum that could not be burned. He was searching for it now. Lights were shining from the windows in the house below the mountain, just like the night when he came here the first time.

Jon was standing behind a tree trunk near the house, his senses keen.

He looked straight through the kitchen window. There, by the table, the woman was sewing because the light reflected in her needles.

The door opened and the man walked in. He was pacing back and forth. He was gesturing about something or other. He seemed agitated. Every once in a while he would disappear, out of Jon's view. Then he would appear again.

At times, all Jon could see was waving arms.

Jon walked closer and was now standing next to the wall. The man kept talking. The woman got up, said something to him. They both seemed excited. The man grabbed the woman's blouse, held her tight. She slapped him across the face and he let go of her and stepped back. Then he arched his back like an animal ready to spring. He leaped forward. The chair fell over and they tumbled on the floor. Jon could not see them any more but could hear their loud voices. The woman got back on her feet but was pulled back down by his long arm. As if locked together as one, they rocked back and forth on the floor. They fought. Again, the woman escaped his grip. Her large body accelerated forward. She took the kitchen floor in one long stride, tore open the door and tumbled out with him at her heels.

So he was a wife beater. Jon felt anger rise inside him.

The front door flew open with a bang. Then they came, as if shot, around the corner and flew down the driveway. She was unexpectedly agile and quick. But in spite of her speed and the downhill slope, she did not have a chance. Behind her, the man was gaining ground. He was angled forward and was stamping his feet. He caught up with her and grabbed her and then she was caught, even though she was flailing her arms around trying to get loose.

"This time I'll really get you good." He jerked her off her feet and she went down.

"No, no, no," she howled, trying to shake him off.

Jon had to restrain himself from getting involved. They were lying no more than five meters away from him. The man was swearing as he held her down. He lifted his arm. His fist was clenched. The woman screamed when he hit her.



At that moment, Jon forgot all the warnings. He stepped forward, was about to challenge the man. Then suddenly something jumped at his feet, then hopped away croaking. He stopped in his tracks as the frog disappeared.

They had now gotten back on their feet, stood there as if nothing had happened. The man gave Jon his hand, said hello. His name was Henry. Jon also introduced himself. The woman shook his hand but did not give her name.

There was no trace of tears or bruises on the woman's face. Her clothes were spotless; even her long hair looked undisturbed.

Jon had a strange notion of having been fooled.

Together they walked into the kitchen. The chairs were standing upright next to the table and the rag rugs were neatly spread out on the floor. No traces of turmoil.

The man sat down by the table and offered him a chair. When Jon sat down, he noticed pain shooting through his shoulder. It had been so good all day and the day before, till now.

"What a surprise," said Henry.

"I'm here on an errand," replied Jon.

"And what could that be?"

"I'm here to pick up something."

"I can't see you have forgotten anything in this house besides this." Henry handed him something. It was the screwdriver he had lost. Again, the man had the upper hand.

"There is also something else." Jon put the screwdriver in the breast pocket of his jacket.

"And what could that be?"

"The Sun-drum."

The woman put away the stitchery and the needles. Cups and a plate of cookies were set on the table. She poured coffee into the cups. Henry poured his coffee onto the saucer, blew on it and drank.

Jon had heard that bad spirits were unable to survive in hot liquid, so he also drank. The coffee tasted dangerously good.

Henry poured more coffee onto his saucer, took a cookie, dipped it in the coffee before he ate it. His wife was now sewing by the kitchen counter and acted as if she were paying no attention to the two sitting at the table. She remained in the background the whole time. Here, it was clearly Henry who was the head of the household.

Jon compared strength with the man. No doubt, he was sitting before an opponent who should not be underestimated. One who would snatch his soul if he had the chance. An ether-noaide. His face was both open and closed at the same time.

The deep wrinkle in the man's forehead made it look like his head was about to crack open. Jon felt power emanating from the small eyes under the bushy brows. Hair also protruded from his nostrils. And from his ears. Gray hair. Even the skin of his face seemed gray. In this indoor light, his eyes were turning yellow.

Finally, his cup and saucer were empty.

"How is your shoulder doing?" asked Henry, and made it sound like an ordinary question.

In that very instant, Jon could feel the injury opening up again. He called on the bear who ate the pain and disappeared with it.



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JON AND HENRY left the woman and her needles behind, walked up to the loft. They sat down across from each other at the table where the drum was lying. They were sitting in the same chairs as last time. This was like being in an arena, Jon thought. Gladiators facing each other. A lonely candle stood in the holder, half-burned-down. Dripping wax ran down the candlestick.

"It doesn't belong to you." Jon nodded toward the drum.

"This is my house and what's in it is mine," replied the man.

"Everything except the drum."

"So you think it is yours?"

"Yes."

"How can something I own belong to you?"

"I'm Banzo and I have come to retrieve Banzo's drum. I'm here to settle up."

The words came to him then and there, came through him. They made him warm and the man turned white.

"Settle up," he repeated in an unusually calm voice. "How did you end up with the drum?"

"I won't tell you."

"You did not make the drum. And you have not acquired it by honest means."

There was a silence.

"This is the tribal drum, the drum of my ancestors," added Jon.

"They are lying in their graves and there they will remain. And if you intend to bring them back, I'll stop you," said the man, with unexpected haste.

"It is also my drum," said Jon.

"What's so special about this old rotten woodwork here?" asked the man as he grabbed the drum.

Henry turned the drum around in his hand. Then Jon noticed something he had not seen while the drum was lying on the table. There was a real Sun sign carved into the bowl, a diamond-shaped symbol with beams radiating in four directions. It was the sign of the Sun God. He had seen this before one time, many, many years ago. It had to be the same drum. This was, indeed, the sign that had shot into him the time when he saw a drum like this for the first time.

He got hot with excitement but used his self-control to hide the emotions that surged through him.

"Or tell me what's so special about this brittle skin that doesn't hardly give out any sound any more," continued Henry.

He held the drum right next to the candle as if he wanted to test it to see if the skin could tolerate intense heat, or as if he wanted to burn it right then and there. Or perhaps he just wanted to give Jon a scare.

Jon moved the candlestick which had stuck to the table from the melted wax.

"Did I frighten you?" laughed Henry.

"Let me look at it."

Henry held the drum still so Jon could see the skin. First, he saw some freshly-drawn figures. Was this Henry's artwork? An animal figure and some other symbols had been painted on the skin with a red felt pen.

Then he noticed the original drawings. They were much more faint but the red dye from alder bark was still visible. Again, he used his self-control to hide his excitement because, as he became aware of the deep red drawings, what he had hoped for, deep down in his wildest imagination, was being confirmed.

"Tell me about the figures, and I will tell you a secret," said Henry.

Jon shook his head.

Then Henry pulled the drum away. Jon felt a pain of disappointment in his belly. He could perhaps have snapped it up, then and there. But it wasn't right to take the drum even if it was his. He

had to win it back, earn it, and that he could only do by rendering Henry harmless. Such were the rules and he had to follow them.

"Do you want to make a deal?"

"Do you have anything I want to hear?"

"If you are Banzo, I do."

"What?"

"How the drum came into my possession."

"I believe you also have something else you need to tell me."

"If you are Banzo, you can't refuse my request."

Jon thought the man suddenly seemed small and harmless. He had frightened him. But now it was as if the man was shrinking; even the shadow that danced on the wall behind him seemed smaller. They looked at each other in silence.

"You are right. I do have something pressing in my heart," said Henry finally. "Something I must tell you."

"The truth needs to come out," said Jon.

"Yes, but first I want you to tell me what's so special about this drum."

"Why?"

"Then I will give it to you."

"A deal?" asked Jon.

"A deal," answered Henry.

Jon told him. About why the skin was divided into three areas, the Upper World, the Lower World and the Middle World. The drawings symbolized Banzo's helping spirits. He had drawn them the way he had seen them. By drawing them, he bound them to the drum. When Banzo used the drum, they would come to him. They came from either the Upper or the Lower World, ready to do what he requested or to answer the questions he asked.

Still, Jon selected his words with care. There was much he didn't mention. Namely, that the drum was more than a mirror of one's own wishes. That a copy of the drum was carved into the mountain by the secret terrace. Neither did he tell him about the

dreams he had had nor the prophecies he had heard. Neither about the joik that came out of the drum's belly. And certainly not that the drum had a will of its own.

"Are the helping spirits still bound to the drum?" asked Henry after the story was told.

"Yes," said Jon, nodded, felt strangely empty. "Now it's your turn to honor your part of the agreement."

"Yes, now we shall settle up." Henry picked up the drum and looked at it.

He stood up and scratched the skin with his nails. A chill went through Jon's body like the time the wolf had scratched on the front door, trying to get in. He could even smell the animal and was waiting for it to attack.

From a place deep inside his brain, a picture rose into his consciousness: a picture of the crystal shield.

He surrounded himself with it. Then the paralyzing chill let go. Henry stopped scratching and stood and stared at him. Quickly, he bent over by the light and blew it out.

Jon pulled the chair back, got to his feet, fumbled for the man in the dark but was hit in the chest. The man pushed him, disappeared right between his arms, out the door, down the stairs.

Dazed, Jon collapsed in a chair. The blow from the artificial hand had luckily only brushed the coiled lasso, although Henry had aimed for his head.

In the middle of the disappointment and the chaos, Jon realized he had been fooled. Not just once. He had been double fooled. The fight, when he came, had been an illusion. So was the whole scene where the man had made Jon feel like a Banzo-noaide. He had brought out compassion in Jon. It was only an act. To lure secrets out of him. He had taken the bait. A successful trick, a small appeal to his heart, and then all his caution had vanished. Henry had sucked him dry. Henry had almost snatched up his soul. And now Henry was gone with the drum, the beater, the guide and everything else Jon had told him.

Then a bear snout growled at him from over in the corner. Jon felt the froth burn against his skin. The bear pushed him with its paws. Jon got to his feet and rushed outside. He listened in the dark. He heard the clattering of rolling stones up on the hillside. Henry was headed up the mountain.

Then the anger exploded in him. The man was not going to get away from him, either to hide the drum or to burn it or use it for any more deviltry.

"You will never get away," he screamed, and sent the bear up the hillside after Henry and then rushed after the sound himself. He had not gone far in the dark before the bear stopped him dead in his tracks.

This was another one of Henry's illusions. He had almost been fooled again. Henry had not run up the hillside. His thoughts were so powerful he could make people believe what he was thinking.

Jon stood and listened and smelled in the dark. Then he became aware of a new and more refined level of his senses. He knew where Henry had gone, even though he could neither see him with his eyes nor hear him with his ears. Still, he knew just as well as radar waves can tell where the prey is outside a submarine.

He sent the bear away again. This time, it did not return.





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JON WAS RUNNING along a river. He moved as fast as he could. The terrain was moist, the moss soggy and the stones slippery. The river ran like a taut black muscle between the steep banks. With ease, as if he were following tracks in broad daylight, he chased after Henry. Henry was somewhere in the darkness ahead of him, not too far away. There was no reason to be sneaking along. Henry certainly knew he was being followed.

Jon came to a place where a suspension bridge crossed the river. It swayed with every step he took. For the first time, he was unsure about the way and when he heard the bridge creaking "no" each time he took a step, he did not hesitate long before he turned back.

The terrain sloped gently downhill. The river had dug itself deeper and deeper into the narrow bed. At this point, it would be impossible to cross. The current was swift and the banks too steep.

The path disappeared into a long, narrow, wet swamp. Should he walk around or attempt crossing it? To walk around would be a major detour. Therefore, he chose to tackle the swamp. While he jumped from tussock to tussock, he asked himself why Henry would choose this way. Why would he embark upon such a strenuous excursion at night? What was he up to? Was he on the run? Did he want to escape and hide with his treasure?

If he intended to hide, this would definitely be a better place than most, thought Jon. He was getting wet to above his knees but it did not matter. He felt extremely warm. Certainly he was tired, but every time he felt stiffness and weariness in his body, he collected it in one spot, then sent it away over the mountains, into the ocean, just as Abraha had taught him. Then he drew new energy from the dancing reindeer herd he had seen behind the mountain a few days ago.

He had almost made it across the squishy swamp. The terrain was getting steeper, then it flattened out and became rocky. Jon was preparing himself to jump from the last swaying tussock. Then he lost his footing. He fell sideways into the wet swamp, between the tussocks. Fortunately, he did not fall on his weak shoulder. Fortunately, he did not feel any pain. Fortunately, he was able to scramble back up by himself. Dripping wet and muddy, his heart pounding. He brushed off most of the muddy water and the swamp grass. Finally, he shook himself like an animal. He untied his shoes, emptied them and wrung out his socks.

He suddenly noticed a grayish-white shadow between the naked birch trees.

The wolf attack came head-on and knocked him off his feet. Jon kicked with one foot, hit the animal in the unprotected belly and tossed it away from him. Jon got back up on his feet, pulled out his knife. There was a thick bush behind him.

Jon was watching the deformed animal with the scrawny body and large head. It wobbled under the weight of the head and the jaws. The teeth were shining like yellow flames behind the black curled lips. The fur was standing up on its neck. It kept rocking its head back and forth, sniffing in Jon's direction and growling from deep down in the throat.

Jon jumped forward with his knife but the wolf leaped out of the way, while slashing back at him. Jon was facing an extremely dangerous opponent, one that had been given a mission to kill.

He would let the wolf initiate the next move. The animal was in no hurry. It circled around him at a few meters' distance. It was surprised at the resistance put up by this human being it had been instructed to kill.

Then all of a sudden, it sprang forward once more but was stopped head-on by the point of the knife and the power of the steel. It kept snapping its jaws right by his arm. Jon was letting the animal dance before the blade. The wolf would dash in from the right, then

from the left, then suddenly, it spun around and went for his hand. It attacked head-on. The knife brushed across its chest and sliced into the flank. The wolf ended up with a long gaping gash in the hide and was about to lose its balance. Jon used this opportunity to drive the knife further in with all his might. The jaws then grabbed the coiled lasso. Jon smelled a nauseating odor coming from the wolf's mouth. The animal was at last backing off.

Jon was still not hurt. At a safe distance, the wolf was licking its wound. The blood was trickling out into the fur and onto the ground. The wolf was, all the while, keeping a close eye on Jon. Then it stretched its legs and opened the enormous jaws. It had not given up yet. It drew its shoulders together. Jon got on his knees, tensed his muscles and held his arm, hand and sharp knife upward to protect himself.

But nothing happened.

Suddenly, the wolf turned its head, startled by a sound from the hillside. It sniffed the air. It grew uneasy, looked back and forth from Jon to something hidden out there in the dark. Jon could hear cracking sounds in the forest.

In the split second when Jon was inattentive, it again leaped for him. The body hit the knife which penetrated deep into its chest. But Jon's arm was forced back by the power and weight of the wolf's body. He covered his throat and face as best he could and tried to push the animal off with his hand. But the huge mouth ripped his arm out of the way and slashed at his exposed throat.

Then an immense roar rose out of nowhere, completely drowning the growls from the wolf. An enormous paw tossed the wolf through the air and away. Jon felt another, even stronger, odor filling his nostrils as a brownish-black shadow stood towering above him. The wolf was slinking away between the trees and was gone.

It was over. Jon had not received a single wound, not even a scratch. The nauseating smell of the wolf had disappeared. Not a hair was left behind from the fight. No tracks could be seen in the dirt. This whole episode must have been a play of his imagination.

Then he noticed that the knife was gone. He searched around on the ground. It was nowhere to be found.

He had lost his weapon. The sheath was empty. And he knew he had not seen the last of the wolf.

Jon began to get cold, his teeth were chattering. His bare feet felt like ice. He stood up, had to move. He ran, stiff and sore, along the river, and could hear the rumble from the waterfall in front of him. But he was not able to get warm. He used his will and concentration, drew the fear and coldness from all parts of his soul and body. Gradually, the lactic acid began to gather. Slowly, the muddy waters of fear followed suit. He was able to direct it all to a point below his navel. Then he called on Ij, the sow. She came and gulped down the evil lump and disappeared out over the ocean.

I was born on Royehodet,  
a mountain in the Hoar Frost Man's kingdom.  
When my ancestors came,  
the land was empty. I carry it with me,  
I enjoy meeting tribal relations,  
feel the rays warm. That is good.

This was the myth of his origin. He called on the tribal powers, the powers of the spirit mountain and the Sun God.

Then he drew courage from something nearer, from the hours just before this all began when he was still driving toward the house, joking and boxing, feeling invincible.

After a while, he came to an overhang in the mountain. A river had carved a deep bed in the rock and here the water was shooting like a jet, over the edge, into a thundering waterfall.

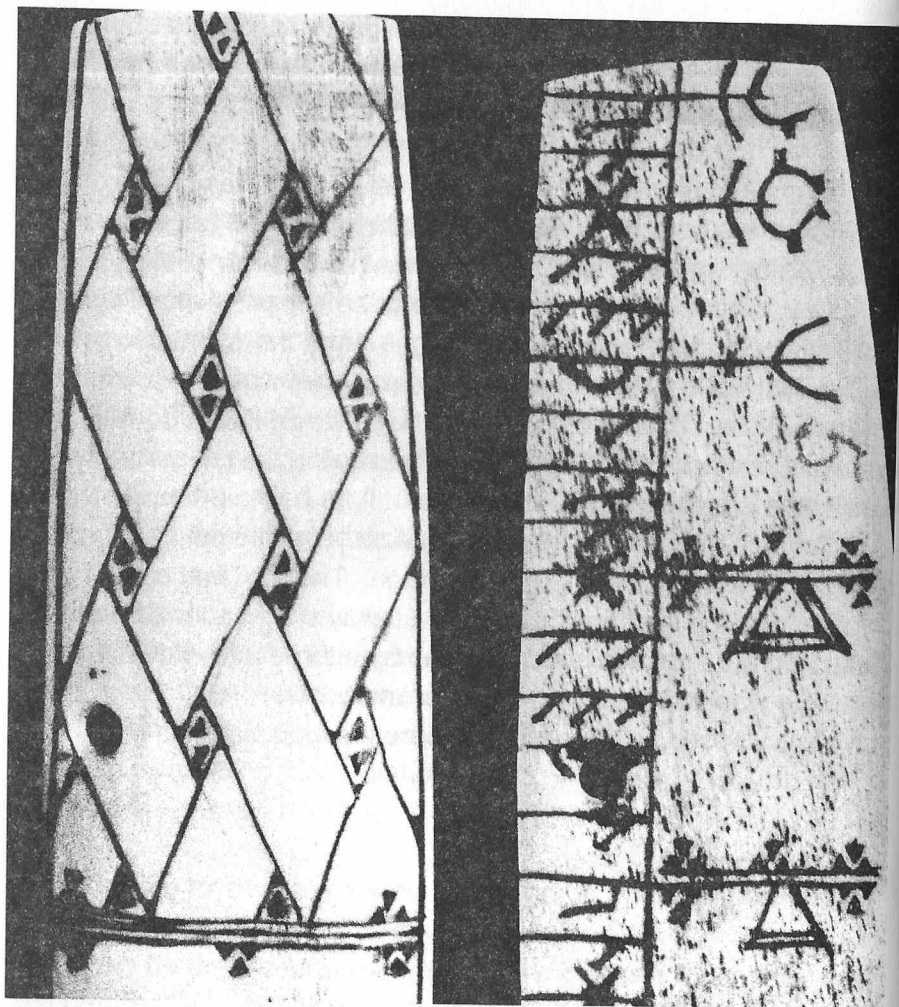
He fastened the lasso to a pine tree, grabbed the rope and leaned out over the precipice as far as he safely dared. Then air, sound and a heavy shower exploded in his face. The jet of water

was being propelled out, was hanging almost motionless in the air before it was pulled down over the edge. The mountain was shaking beneath his feet like a fast-moving car over washboard.

He had chosen the wrong side of the river. Henry was on the other side where the bank rose steeply beneath a cliff. Jon began to walk back. On its narrowest spot, the river was not even ten meters wide. But the banks were high and steep and the current swift. To walk around would take the rest of the night. And there was always a chance he would run into the wolf again. What would happen now when he did not have the knife? And what would Henry do with the drum in the meantime? There had to be another way, a quicker way across the current, his main obstacle.

Jon felt dizzy when he fully realized his dilemma. He had chosen the wrong direction on the bridge. The "no" that came from the planks of the suspension bridge was only another one of Henry's tricks. So here he was, stopped dead by a ten-meter-wide foaming river. He was so close, yet so far, far away.

He collapsed on the ground in pure disappointment.



*Ornaments and mythological signs.*

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"SHOULD WE TELL him?"

Jon heard a voice, looked around. Nobody was there.

"We can tell him," answered another voice.

Then Jon became aware of two bluebells at the edge of the slope. He was truly between the worlds. For these were his ancestors' flowers. He could see and hear them clearly and, at the same time, he could smell the earth and the water and could feel the ground beneath him.

"Walk along the river to the cliff," said one of the bluebells.

"Set your foot on the foam," the other one told him.

The vision faded. And the enchanting experience disappeared. Jon got back on his feet. In spite of his predicament, he felt energized as he was walking along the river.

It felt like walking right into the old legend about Banzo and Stallo, the one Abraha had told him.

This legend took place when Banzo and his wife were moving from the coast to the interior.

"Wait here," he had said to his wife, "while I cross the river and greet a visitor."

Someone named Hannu was envious because Banzo had better reindeer luck than he did.

Hannu had cut the stallo out of the sod, made blood offerings to him and had lit a fire on him. He had promised him half of his property and money and half of his lifetime on earth in exchange for Stallo taking Banzo's life.

Banzo walked across the river and met Stallo behind the hill. They began to wrestle, fought from morning until evening. Then Banzo got a hold around Stallo's waist, lifted him up and threw him, head first, into the rocky hillside. Stallo fainted. Banzo stabbed him with his knife, killed his dog and buried them both. At the same time,



Hannu himself died because when Stallo's lifetime was up, so was his, due to his promise.

I want night.  
I want earth.  
I want the innermost dream pictures.  
There is a lifetime of memories.  
When I try to remember,  
I forget.

Uneasiness is to call forth  
something unwanted.

Jon had at last made it back to the long narrow swamp, wanted to detour around it this time. Then he noticed a cliff above the river. The bluebell had said something about a cliff. The river had carved its way into the stone and ran in rapids ten meters below. Then he discovered a narrow crevice leading down to the river.

Jon wiggled down the trough, came to a ledge above the current. A boulder had tumbled into the river. He could manage to jump down onto the stone but could most likely not jump back up if the way ahead was blocked.

He readied himself and leaped across the water masses. His feet took hold on the slippery stone and he scrambled up on it. There were still several meters from the boulder to the other bank. The current was strong and it felt like it wanted to sweep the feet out from under him. If the river was several meters deep, he would have no chance of making it across.

But his foot reached the bottom before the water reached his knees. Carefully, step by step, he made his way across the rapids.

Uneasiness is to call forth  
something unwanted.

Jon was back on the trail. The path led toward the cliff which looked black from age and wetness. The mountain was divided by small and large crevices and outcrops and provided the ideal hiding place for black magicians. It would take a long time to search through all the hiding places. Jon climbed up and down the ravines, wiggled in and out of the narrow cracks and jumped from boulder to boulder. But he did not find the man he knew was somewhere nearby.

Other methods were needed. He concentrated on his third eye. But he was no longer able to see with the eye that had guided him here through the dark night. No matter what direction he faced, an impenetrable dark blanket was lowered in front of him. Then, he sent a focused arrow-like thought to Jov who immediately became visible. He looked impressive, dressed in full costume and surrounded by beaming light. With a commanding motion, Jov pointed out the direction with his spear. The blade seemed to have grown. It illuminated the night even after Jov was gone. There was something special about this spear.

Jon got back on his feet and resumed his search, moving ahead toward the edge of the cliff. Here he found a ledge at the far end. Carefully, he stepped out on the plateau. A figure was walking toward him. Jon readied himself to fight.

"You have a visitor," said Jon in a stern voice.

"He is not here. He didn't go anywhere." The man kept walking toward him, with the ease of a mountain goat. It was not Henry. It was Abraha.

"Go back," continued Abraha.

"Where?"

"To the house you came from."

Jon hesitated.

"Go and visit. Take the drum. Don't let him keep it any longer. Don't let him fool you again and don't let him eat your will this time."

Jon was about to say something, make an excuse, but Abraha interrupted him abruptly.

"Go now. Away."

The words were spoken harshly. They were bothering Jon the entire way back to his original starting point, the little house below the mountains.

The house stood like a grayish-white morning shadow against the brownish-black autumn-colored mountains. He peeked through the windows. The rooms were empty.

The house was sleeping. The car was sleeping. He prayed that the people who lived there were also sleeping.

The front door was unlocked. Jon walked into the hallway. He knew where he was going. He was visiting. Without taking too many precautions, he walked up the stairs to the second floor. A door at the end of the hallway was ajar. He peeked in through the crack. There they were lying, peacefully sleeping, the man and the woman. The entire house was quiet as if time were holding its breath. He walked quietly down the hall into the drum-room.

The chest was open and it was empty. The screws had been fastened and everything was put back in place since he was here last. He looked around in the morning light. The room was empty. Abraha had sent him back and here he was standing, not finding what he had come to fetch.

Jon sneaked back out into the hallway, back to the half-opened door. Slowly, he opened it further. On the table by the window, he noticed the drum, covered by a black shawl. Would he dare? Step by step, he walked past the bed with the sleeping couple--on his way to the table.

They neither turned over, sat up nor awakened.

Carefully, he removed the shawl.

It was not the drum he had uncovered, but a small oval jewelry box. He put the shawl back in place. The box and the jewelry were of no interest.

Jon looked around the room. It was bare, no closets where the drum might be hidden. He got down on his knees, glanced under-

neath the bed. Several pairs of shoes were there, but not what he was searching for.

He walked downstairs and into the kitchen. His eyes were searching but did not find. Then he walked into the room next to the kitchen. From the wall, the wolf growled at him, like before. He examined a couple of cardboard boxes. One of them was full of weekly magazines. In the other he found old, stiff, dusty curtains. Then he opened the cupboard in the corner.

Where could the drum be? Had Henry hid it outside? Or did he have it in bed with him, under the comforter? Should he go back up and pull the comforter to find out? If they awakened without a cover and found him standing there looking at them, they would probably be scared to death.

He stuck out his tongue at the growling wolf, walked toward the door and back into the kitchen.

"Is this what you are looking for?" a voice behind him said. Jon jumped around. Henry stood at the wall, holding out the drum. Jon nodded and let his temper fly as he leaped forward for the drum.

As he grabbed it, he got jolted. He was unable to move. He became paralyzed. Froze.

Henry was grinning with satisfaction as he circled around him. Although Jon's body had ceased functioning, his mind had not. It was flashing a bolt of lightning into his memory. Akko had once told him how to bind and how to release that which was bound.

You who lock the stone in the current,  
you who lock the sun and the stars,  
lock the bird in flight, lock the thief in the barrel.

Here he stood like a thief in a barrel. What was the antidote?

You who release the storm  
you who release the shooting star,  
you who release the soul from Hell,  
release the thief from the barrel.

Then, the will and the strength came back into his limbs. He was free. Last time, he was knocked down in this room. That was not going to happen again, not now. Now he had space around him, space for his arms and legs.

Time had come to settle up.

Henry no longer had the artificial hand, but a sharp metal awl screwed to his arm. Jon grabbed a chair, held it up in front of him. The awl hit the seat of the chair and the point bored into the wood. Henry pulled back but was unable to pull it out. Jon had the upper hand with his two free arms and pressed Henry against the wall.

"It's better to talk than to fight." Jon was panting as he spoke these words.

"You'll soon have a visitor."

"Perhaps it is you the wolf will visit," answered Jon.

Then Henry struck out with the drum. The wooden bowl hit Jon right across the nose and mouth, and he began to bleed.

"There, you are losing your power, evil man," hissed Henry.

Jon suddenly felt dizzy and weak as if his soul's power were being sucked dry.

"Now toxic blood is flowing forth. May it flow until it's all gone."

Henry jerked the sharp awl free from the chair.

Then he began to dance around on the floor. The dancing body was slowly fading till it became invisible.

"Use your third eye," Abraha had told him.

While Henry's shadow was dancing around him, Jon was slowly able to see what was going on. The dance was another trick. Henry had released himself from the dancing shadows and had walked out of the room and disappeared with the drum.

Outside the house, Henry began to crawl on hands and knees around a pine bush. All the while, he was growling and snapping his teeth. The top of the pine was bent and pointed toward the south. The man crawled clockwise. And as he kept moving, fur began to grow on his body, a tail grew between his legs, and in his face a wolf's snout started to take shape. After circling around three times, a complete wolf appeared through the pine sprigs. The wolf disappeared up the hillside with the drum in its mouth. It limped on one front leg. It kept looking back as if it was afraid of both hunters and predators of its own kind.

At the same time, a female bird crashed out of the bushes and began flapping up the hillside, following the wolf. He thought he recognized the female bird. It was Henry's wife. She was holding a large stone in her hands and that was the reason why she could not quite manage to lift off the ground.

After them came another wolf, grayish-white in its fur and with blood on its belly and with a knife stuck in its chest. Jon certainly recognized him.

Then Akko appeared out of nowhere.

"You must stand like a stone in the current," she said, and stopped the bleeding from his nose. Her hands brushed all traces of weariness from his body with the same care others brush crumbs off a table. She recharged him with hope and strength.

He walked outside and thanked Akko. Then she suddenly changed into a young woman and put her arms around him.

Now Jon was taught about the secret trembles that, at certain times, could be felt both in body and soul. Old people had told him stories about this. They used the word *likkatusak* to describe this feeling of bliss or ecstasy. They used to practice it in church. There they would jump up and down on the church benches until the whole church was vibrating. This was pure joy. The knowing of these secret trembles in the body and the soul descended from ancient times, before the book religions, from a time before the church spires



and the religious bans, from a time when the great tribal picture was still encircling everyone.

Yes, it is good.

I become strong and warm.

A great power is with me now.

It no longer weighs me down  
with its tremendous force.

It lifts me up.

It guides me along.

I see everything clearly.

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JON FOUND HENRY in a gap in the mountains where a river flowed out of a lake. Henry was in human form again and was busy working in the swamp. This tundra was Jon's kingdom. He felt more at home here than in the narrow valleys. Here he could feel the wind in his nose and could think clearly.

Ether-Henry was cutting the sod with a knife. The work was slow because the sod was hard with morning frost. But Henry traced and cut until he was able to lift a sod-figure out of the swamp. Jon surrounded himself with the crystal shield. Then he headed across the frozen ground, straight for Henry. The man was completely absorbed in his work, was jumping back and forth around the sod-man.

Jon tapped him on the shoulder.

"Now you have a visitor," he said.

The man spun around with a knife in one hand and the awl in the other. Jon jumped back and stepped all over the sod-man. He would use his screwdriver as a weapon if needed.

"You have no business being here. Go away," Henry was hissing.

"I came for the drum."

"Don't, for one second, believe you can have it."

"I'm here to take it."

"Soon the sod-man will take you."

"Give me the drum," ordered Jon.

"You don't even know where it is. You'll never set eyes on it again."

Henry laughed loudly, while stretching his body like a howling wolf. Then he began to promise half his life and half his time on earth and half his property to the sod-man if he would only do as he, Henry, commanded.



"Come to life, come to life, come to life," Henry begged and begged. But the sod-man remained stiff as ice.

"Get out of here," yelled Henry. He was grinding his teeth while trying to strike at Jon with the knife and the awl.

"Go, evil man, go."

Jon looked around. Henry was alone and the drum was nowhere to be seen. But he knew Henry had brought it up on the tundra with him. It had to be somewhere nearby.

The wind came through the gap and in the wind Jon could hear a joik that sounded familiar, a joik he recognized from earlier that day. It was the joik from the drum's belly. It moved its way straight into his own stomach like a fine silver thread. As the thread attached itself to him, it pulled him toward one of the twin peaks.

The poor man in the swamp was still trying to light a fire on the sod-man, to warm him up, give him power. But the frozen sod would not catch on fire and the wind kept blowing out the flame of his lighter.

"You won't be able to give life to that killer. I have already stepped all over him." Jon spat on the sod where the man was dancing and exercising his black magic.

Once upon a time there was a people  
who had great tribal pictures.

That was us. Then.

Before the first stallo came  
and severed our common circle.

Later, stallo after stallo came.

Each took something.

Each created new boundaries.

The people imitated them,  
learned to breed their own black powers,  
cast them on each other.

The people lost their tribal pictures.

This is us. Now.

Jon was running like he had never run before, ran across the swamps of autumn, toward the peak. The joik became clearer and clearer. He had paws now and he was moving fast. Then he became aware of something chasing him and he ran even faster.

But after a while, it was catching up with him. He tried to lengthen his strides, increase the speed another notch. Then left his pursuer behind.

The terrain began to rise. Became steep. Jon could not keep the speed up. And it did not take long before he heard panting behind him. All of a sudden, a wolf passed him at an extended trot, moving up through the plateau.

Standing at the top, he felt the wind blowing through his sweaty hair. The joik was now loud, resembling the volume at an outdoor concert when the sound is roaring. In a gully nearly protected from the wind, Henry was busy arranging birch bark for a fire. On the ground, skin facing up, lay the drum, joiking in the wind. Louder and louder it sounded. The flames were now licking up over the bark. Just then, Jon jumped forward, lunged for the drum, but Henry was quicker and snatched it up. Jon pushed both the man and the drum away from the crackling fire.

Like a white shadow, the deformed bloody wolf appeared on the steep slope behind the sly, crafty man.

Jon understood what was about to happen and grew pale. Henry more felt than understood the danger. He turned around with a certain grace, saw what was coming, the revenge.

Henry threw the drum with all his might, out over the edge toward the ravine. Next, he stabbed the wolf in the chest with the awl, but the wolf sank his teeth into the man's flesh and together they rolled down the steep mountainside.

The wind caught the old drum, lifted it up like a singing kite that was held by a silver thread from Jon's stomach and blew it back toward the mountain. It sailed high above Jon, heading for the peak above him.

Suddenly, a long arm reached up and grabbed the flying drum. The drum-catcher was a woman, half-clad in feathers, the other half in a Norwegian sweater. It had to be Akko. But his mouth dropped open when he realized it was Henry's wife who had saved the drum. She landed close to Jon. The bird feathers now disappeared, leaving the edge of her sweater flapping around her knees.

"Women are most powerful in the air," Akko had told him. Women were powerful flying shamans.

"Why do you want the drum?" asked the woman.

"I want to learn about shamanism."

"From whom?"

He did not answer.

She held the drum out toward him. But as he tried to reach for it, she stepped back.

"From whom?" she repeated.

Jon did not reply this time either. And again she pulled the drum away as he tried to grab it.

"From whom?"

The last thing Jon wanted to share with her was that he was going to learn from the drum.

Again, he tried to take the drum she was holding out in front of her. Again he failed. He became increasingly irritated as a broader smile spread across her lips.

"Wouldn't you like to find out what happened to the one who tumbled down the mountainside?" he asked.

She only laughed.

"Why are you laughing?"

"You don't understand anything at all," she quickly replied, with emphasis on "anything."

"He might need help."

Now it was she who did not answer.

"He could be hurt, perhaps even dead."

"He'll be fine."

"What's your name?" asked Jon.

Again, there was no response.

"I'll call you Askovit," said Jon suddenly.

"Askovit, what kind of name is that?"

"Your name."

"What does it mean?"

"Give me the drum and I'll tell you."

"You can't cast a name on me like that," replied Askovit. She began to shake her arms and her legs, her hair and her body and her sweater as if she were trying to shake something off. In the process, her face grew darker and darker.

"You are Askovit, I see it now," said Jon.

"No," she answered.

"Are you following the path of the sun?" asked Jon.

"I'm definitely not Askovit."

"Askovit you are and Askovit you will remain and everything you touch will die."

By this time, a cunning grin had appeared on her face. Trickery was something she knew. She wanted to escape.

"You are a rich man from the south. You live a prosperous life and you are wise. Not like us poor little Samis who don't know about anything except these mountains, lakes, reindeer and mukluks."

"And about the drum?" Jon added.

"Yes, a poor drum is all we have to put our trust in. You are one of us. You were lucky to be sent away so you could have an opportunity to make something out of your life. You ought to help us instead of chasing an old woman around the mountains and call her Askovit, the Moon Queen. I am not of the Moon family. I follow the Sun. Now that Banzo has come back, he will show the way," she said.

"Yes," replied Jon, seeing right through her act. The whole time she spoke, she was taking small steps backwards. Would she try to escape, fly away?

"Askovit, you won't get far in that direction. There the bear is standing blocking the way."

He walked toward her, trying to grab the drum. She quickly swung out of the way and was readying herself to jump into the air to fly away, but the feathered shroud failed to materialize.

The circle between them grew narrower and narrower. When he thought he had her in his grip, she somehow slipped mysteriously away. Finally, he pinned her up against a stone. She was tired. He could tell. It would be more difficult to get the drum from her than from Henry. Unlike the man, she belonged to the tribe. She knew very well what was at stake.

"Now we will settle up," he said with emphasis on each word as he tried to grab her.

But again, his fingers caught only air. She ran with quick steps toward the edge of the cliff, jumped out and flapped her wings and flew seven or eight meters across the abyss and landed at the very end of another cliff.

"Now we'll settle up." She waved the drum in the air. Her laughter reached him through the wind.

"I know who you were going to learn shamanism from. You were going to learn it from the Sun-drum. But I have the drum and I will burn it. You will never see it again," she shouted.

A ridge no wider than a hand led out to the cliff. On each side, the smooth, steep mountain dropped straight off into the abyss.

"Come here if you dare. But be quick."

She pulled birch bark and matches out from underneath her sweater and began to scratch a match in the hollow of her hand. The first one went out, as did the second and the third. She threw them angrily out into the wind. Jon was beginning to believe that the Wind-man would help him and the drum once more.

But then she was able to light one strip of bark, and then another. Soon a small fire was burning in a hollow on the cliff. Jon was running short of time.

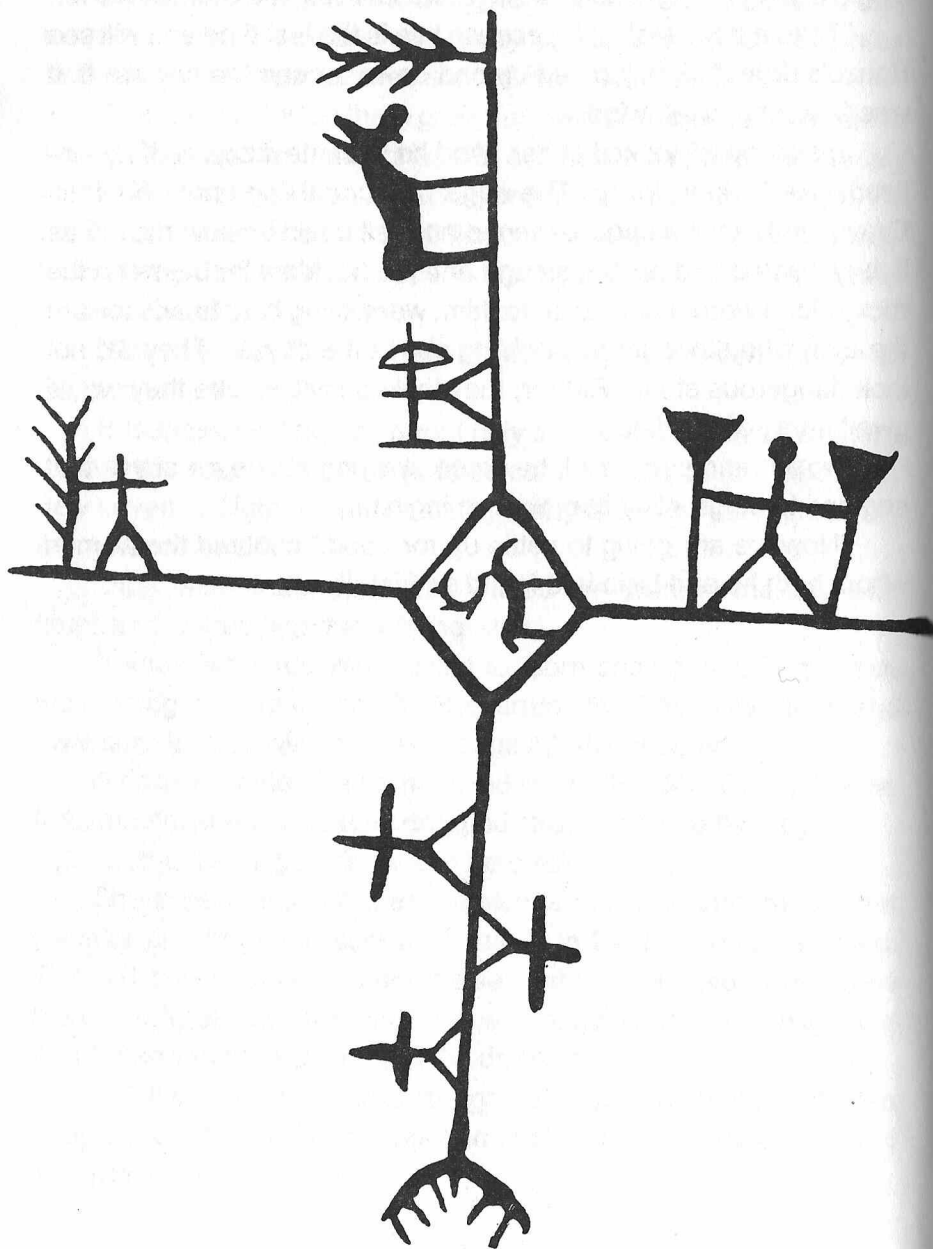
He began to walk out on the ridge. It was easy to keep his balance. It almost felt like he was flying. In the middle, the edge was cracking and unstable. Askovit was waving the drum in the air.

"Take a good look at it because this is the last time you will see Banzo's drum." She jumped up and down around the tiny fire that was flickering in the wind.

Jon stopped, looked at her. And he became dizzy, as if hypnotized. He looked down. The edge was crumbling under his feet. Gravel and small stones loosened and fell down in slow motion as if they wanted to drag him along. And the boulders far below on the rocky slope were reaching up for him, were lifting their hands toward the man who stood there wobbling above the abyss. They did not look dangerous at all. Rather, they looked inviting, like they would give him a soft landing.

Frozen and paralyzed, he stood swaying above an abyss that seemed to be greeting him, welcoming him.

"Now we are going to settle up for good," shouted the woman whom both he and Lajla had found so friendly.



THROUGH THE WIND, he could hear another voice.

"Breathe," it said. "Breathe."

Jon summoned what was left of his will power and lifted his head. This small movement required an enormous exertion of energy. But it saved him from falling.

Another person was standing out there, calm and strong.

It was not Askovit. It was Akko.

Jon inhaled, felt the air move through his nostrils and down into his lungs. This opened his locked thoughts and his frozen muscles. As the air flowed through him, he regained awareness of his body and his will to live.

He came out of the hypnosis.

"Lie down," yelled Akko.

He more or less fell down on his stomach, with one arm and one leg on each side of the ridge and with his torso and cheek against the rough stone.

"Turn around," demanded Akko.

It felt like practicing on a balance beam at a great height and with the wind as his only footing.

He balanced his weight equally on both sides of the crumbling ridge, twisted his body around and swung his arms and legs in place on the opposite side. The lasso was not hindering this movement; on the contrary, it helped to steady him. The height made him dizzy but this was a dizziness he could handle.

Then, the screwdriver slipped out of his pocket and fell slowly toward the rock-strewn slope below.

Jon crawled back onto safe solid ground.

Akko followed with the drum in one hand and Askovit in the other. Askovit was swearing and hissing all the way until she was turned into a stone.



"Take the drum." Akko handed it to Jon and disappeared.

Then there in front of him stood Henry with the pipe of death in his hand. Henry was looking bad, smeared with blood, his clothes torn and with teeth-marks in his chest. The stump of his arm was bare, the dangerous awl missing. But in his right hand he had a pipe. He brought it to his mouth and began to suck.

This had no effect because Jon was being protected by the drum. Henry looked quite foolish standing there with the brass pipe sticking out of his mouth.

But on the skin of the drum, a figure began to vibrate as if it wanted to dislodge. This was one of the new figures Henry had drawn with the red felt pen. It was the stallo-pipe.

"There is no more stallo power left. You can't eat anybody any more. Just surrender and confess," said Jon.

Then a dark laughter emitted from the man.

"You can't just take the drum and get away with it. If you do that, things will never go well for you. We must follow the rules," answered Henry as he walked closer to Jon.

"This is a good place to settle up," said Jon.

"He who wins gets to keep the drum for himself, such are the rules." Henry was close now.

"I have been looking forward to this battle for a long time," said Jon.

"First we have to dig a grave. That's what the rules say," added Henry.

They dug a grave at the edge of the swamp. Then they walked back to settle up once and for all.

Out of the blue, Henry hit him with the pipe. The blow struck Jon across the shoulder, right where he had been injured. The pain flared up, shot all the way down to his fingertip before it numbed both the arm and the hand.

"Now we are fighting on equal terms." Henry grinned and threw the pipe away.

Jon was not able to get a good hold on Henry with only one arm. But with Henry's good arm, which had the strength of two, and with the help of his stumped arm, he was able to grab Jon. He was lifted in the air and tossed against the mountainside. Jon leaped back up but Henry grabbed him again and threw him on the ground.

This time it took Jon longer to get back on his feet. He realized he was in serious trouble. Henry was coming straight for him, red-eyed, hunched over and broad-legged. For the first time, Jon retreated. Then they circled around on the cliff. Jon used his left arm to fend Henry off. But the latter grabbed it, jerked Jon off his feet and into the air.

Just at that moment, Jov appeared and pointed his spear at Henry. Henry fell backward. When he crawled back up, the stump of his arm was dangling as if it had been broken in two.

"Now we are fighting on equal terms," groaned Jon.

Once more, they circled around each other, waving their arms with neither of them being able to get a grip on the other. Jon was the first one to strike and he dealt Henry a blow in the chest. Fresh blood ran from the wound and dripped down on the stones.

"Now it is your power that is running out." Jon could feel the fight going better for him now.

Suddenly, Henry jumped forward, placed one hand down on the mountain, did a somersault and kicked Jon in the chest so he flew a meter through the air. Fortunately, the lasso buffeted the blow; otherwise, it could have been disastrous.

Jon got back up. Henry hopped after him with one hand down and with blood running down his face. Another kick sent Jon sailing three meters through the air, ever closer to the cliff. This time he could hardly make it back up on his feet. He was at the end of his rope. Then he received one last blow in the chest, flew seven meters back and landed at the edge above the abyss.

Henry left him alone and fetched the drum. He began to pack it full of birch bark while Jon was trying to inch his way toward him.

"Why does it have to be burned?" Jon received a kick in the nose as an answer. Then he gave up, was unable to whisper neither a prayer nor a curse, much less get to his feet and save the drum.

"It won't obey me," answered Henry.

He got out the lighter and lit the fire. The birch bark began to crackle inside the belly of the drum. Then Henry stuck the burning drum in Jon's face, close enough that the fire burned his skin. Jon jerked his head away.

"When the fire has taken what belongs to it, then darkness will rule, and no more Sun-drums will be found."

Henry began to laugh while the birch bark kept crackling and burning. The dry wood caught on fire and burned with light flames. Slightly darker smoke came out of the opening in the bowl. There was still not enough oxygen in there. But the flames were growing.

"This is the final battle." Henry laughed his evil laugh and placed the burning drum one meter away from Jon's face. He looked from the fire to Jon and had a vigilant expression in his eyes.

Jon tried to twist around, to roll his body on top of the flames, but it only turned out to be a small, useless movement. He was not able to do anything. He had to lie there, defeated, while watching the drum burn.

Just then, the skin was lit from the inside by the flames. And Jon was shown what the drum was really all about.

It was a giver of life, a counselor and a preserver.

The entire mountainous area that Jon knew so well and thought of as his land was drawn in the middle of the skin, with mountains and fjords, rivers, tundra and lakes. On the upper part of the skin stood Jov and the four dancing sisters. Next to them, the Fire goddess, Bajan and several other ancestors. There he also spotted Banzo and others he had only read about. Even Jesus was there.

At the bottom part of the drum, in the Lower World, he first saw Ij, the sow. After Ij came the reindeer, the fish, the whales and the birds of the underworld. Then a horse. Then a unicorn. Finally, all the giants from the inner earth, giants with mystical names. These

were not evil. It was they who held up the crust of the earth. Even the mountain he was lying on was drawn on the drum. The mountain where he met Stallo the first night was one of the mountains close to the edge.

The fire was growing stronger and stronger inside the drum's belly. All the figures on the skin were beginning to glow.

Then the skin burst with a big bang and the flames shot out of the bowl.

All the figures dislodged from the skin and were sailing around in the fire and the air before they each found their direction. The ancient symbols were gathering and forming the very drum Jon had seen in his dreams. Then the figures flew into his body, one by one, except for the Sun sign. It disappeared like an arrow of light up into the sky. The flies and the stallo-pipe also dislodged. These disappeared into Henry. The wolf was standing there quietly for a long time. It was watching Jon. Then it slowly turned its head toward Henry. The body was trembling under the weight of the large head. Then it snarled and ate its way into the man and was gone.

"Is there hope for me on this last day?" moaned Henry in a low voice.

"There is no last day, no end."

"Will I ever get another chance?"

Henry remained silent for a long time. It seemed as if he went into a trance.

"Once, I witnessed a head getting crushed. With a stone." The voice was low, the face turned away.

"Was that the time you took the drum?"

"In a year you will have a visitor," said he who got his head crushed."

"Then I showed up."

"Yes, exactly on the day," answered Henry.

"I even had the same name as him."

"Yes," replied Henry.

"Was it you who held the stone?"

Henry did not answer.

"You also tried to stop me," said Jon.

"Yes."

"And kill me."

Again Henry remained silent.

"How did you find me?" asked Henry finally.

"The drum led me to you."

"But I had the drum."

"Its will was stronger than yours."

Henry drifted into a state where he lost all awareness of Jon. After a while, he suddenly covered his eyes with his arm as if he saw something he did not want to see.

"He is coming back," he said, almost in a whisper.

"Who?"

"It's him."

Jon thought he saw the shadow of a small man whom he had once given a lift, a man who had warned him against evil, a man who many, many years ago, had set his examining eyes upon him, in a small kitchen somewhere.

"You can't run away from yourself any more," said Jon.

Henry suddenly went into contraction with cramps. He gasped for air, could not breathe. Fresh blood was dripping from the wound in his chest. Then he collapsed.

"Askovit, help me." It sounded like a last plea.

The stone around her crumbled. She was set free. She knelt by the dying man. With a shawl, she wiped the blood off his face. Then she pressed the shawl against the wound in his chest. With a kindness and a compassion that impressed Jon, she nurtured him, talked to him. An intimacy radiated from them that Jon respected. She pulled something out of his wound, hid it underneath her sweater. It was a knife. Then she dragged the man behind the ledge.

Askovit came right back. Her face was gray, her eyes black, her hair looked wild in the wind. In her hands she held a large stone that she lifted higher and higher with each step as she came storming toward him. There was no doubt about what she intended to do with the stone.

Jon succeeded in pushing himself off with his healthy arm and rolled into her feet.

The stone smashed into the ground just where his head had been. Askovit tripped, jumped up again and ran after the stone that was rolling toward the cliff.

Then Jon understood.

"You did it, you threw the stone," yelled Jon.

"Yes, me," she answered, pulling the knife out from her sweater. What could he use to defend himself?

"You did it and not he," Jon repeated in an attempt to buy time.

"Poor Henry, he ran away," said Askovit as she came nearer with the knife raised.

The screwdriver could have been a weapon, but it was gone. He pulled the crystal out of his pocket, turned the point toward her.

"I'll get you," she snarled as Jon drew back.

"You will never get me."

"This will get you." Askovit waved with the knife.

"It will never get me."

She suddenly made a strike at him. The blade cut his trousers but did not reach the flesh.

"Rip a little first, don't stab, rip a little first," she chanted as if she were about to reach ecstasy.

Jon crawled forward toward the furious woman, using his last bit of strength. He finally collapsed next to the drum-hammer. He was unable to move another inch. Now he was trapped. He had expended all his energy. Had given it his all, had reached clear down to the depths of his being and now he was empty. Completely.

"Rip a little first, rip a little first," chanted Askovit, while waving the blade in front of his face.



Jon had hoped the crystal would perform a miracle, melt the knife or turn the woman into a fly. But it had to happen at once. In a minute it would be too late. But the crystal neither glowed nor radiated magical powers.

In the sky, he became aware of Orion's belt. There, three stars began to spin. Then Jon heard a mighty roar across the sky, just like the time inside the mountain when he had met the fire shaman.

"Watch out, fire is striking from the stars," he shouted.

"No, now you shall meet the steel."

As she tried stabbing his chest, he threw his body to the side. The blade slid into the coiled lasso but stopped before it wounded him. The next stab made sparks fly as the steel hit stone in front of his eyes. Then she stabbed him. The blade slashed into his thigh.

It suddenly sounded as if a distant thunder were filling the air. Askovit heard it too, turned around and looked.

From the horizon, a bird sailed toward them. It had enormous wings and a curved beak.

Askovit threw the knife aside and began to run.

The bird was hungry. It was hunting for prey. And there he lay, already a half-butchered carcass. The starlight was dimly reflected in talons as thick as arms. But they did not strike. The neck feathers jingled like reindeer bells as the bird sailed right above his body and disappeared.

This was Guaddan, a bird shaped by an evil sorcerer so he could be cast on others, to kill them.

The next thing Jon heard was the scream from a woman caught in Guaddan's claws.

Jon found himself at the bottom of a deep muddy ocean, slowly floating upward. He felt he was being suffocated. He could not move any faster, no matter how much he swam or kicked.

This was not sleep. Neither was it death.

When he got closer to the surface, he could see a woman standing there waiting for him. Jon tried to turn around, swim back

into the depths where he could hide because he did not have the courage to, did not have the desire to, and simply could not face Askovit again.

But then the woman smiled. It was Lajla. However, she looked different somehow.

When Jon came to, the embers had died down and the ashes were blowing across the mountain. He scrambled to his feet, his muscles tender. His shoulder seemed better. He had no broken bones, although he had numerous cuts and bruises. The stab wound in his thigh was harmless and the bleeding had stopped by itself. The crystal felt cold as ice.

Jon rallied up his strength. He had to get down from this mountaintop. Soon it would be morning. In that moment, the sky opened up and the Northern lights were dancing.

He knows the opening in the mountain  
where the spirits live.

He has been there  
and there he was taught  
that small flowers grow  
deep inside the human eye.

When the eyes close for the last time,  
the flowers move on  
like the Northern lights in the sky.

He looked around for Henry but he was nowhere in sight. Askovit was also gone.

Morning came with a strange green cloud cover.

He took one last look across the mountaintop. His eyes fell on the knife Askovit had thrown on the ground.

It was his knife. The one he had stabbed the wolf with, the one she had pulled from Henry's chest when she was caring for him.



Jon picked it up and placed it in the sheath.

He then walked down toward the valley. He had saved his life and the knife had been given back to him. But the drum had been burned. Still, he had found the most important treasure of all, a drum that could not be burned. A drum that belonged in the flames. The real Sun-drum.

It he carried with him. Inside him.

A car came toward him on the road. When Jon noticed the chauffeur, his temper flared up. He grabbed a stone, wanted to hit the man and push the car over the cliff. But as he raised his arm to throw, he became aware of the tree where the little man lived. It had fallen during the night, was lying at the edge of the road with its sprawling roots. Then Jon remembered. He was still between the worlds and could not tolerate people nor interruptions and could hardly tolerate the flooding light of day. The fact that the tree had fallen seemed almost like an act of vengeance because it had warned him of the dangers ahead.

Jon crawled into his van, pulled the curtains and covered himself with the sleeping bag. He slept straight through the day and the night till the next morning.

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ABRAHA WAS HOME when Jon arrived.

"Were you able to carry out your mission?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Do you have the drum?"

"No. They burned it."

"The prophecy did not come true then?"

"It is, at least, many steps closer to being fulfilled."

"That's good to hear," he said.

"You seem relieved," said Jon.

"I've been anxious," answered Abraha.

"Thanks for your help, by the way."

"So you were aware of my presence?"

"I saw you. Spoke with you."

"I told the dog to be quiet and not disturb me because Jon needs my help. You know, I had to concentrate."

"Yes."

"The bear took care of the wolf, didn't he?"

"The bear threw the wolf into the air when it attacked me. In the end, the wolf disappeared into Henry."

Jon told his story. About being between the worlds. About the help he received from Akko and Jov. About the confrontation with Stallo, the stone and the knife. About what had happened to Askovit and Henry. About the burning of the drum. About the magnificent Northern lights. And about the healing of his shoulder.

"I wish I would have had more strength when I was lying there. Perhaps I could have saved the drum from being burned."

"Nothing is lost."

"No, but I still wish I could have saved it."

"Of course."

"But why were you relieved when I returned without the drum?"

"I don't want you to think I'm afraid to die. There is no death. But it's good to be living now that the wisdom is coming back."

"Yes. We must tell everyone about the openings and about the Path of the Sun."

"I hear what you are saying," remarked Abraha.

"Don't you also feel that the wisdom belongs to everyone? Not just the tribe? That we must share with everyone who is interested?"

"I hear you believe that."

"Yes. But don't you, too?"

"I have never told anyone outside the tribe about the openings," answered Abraha.

"Let's discuss this."

"What's there to talk about?"

"I feel we need to go out to everyone interested and share what has been given to us. The more you share, the more there is to be shared."

"Is it necessary to tell them about a head that was smashed like an egg and that the same thing almost happened to you?"

"I'm not talking about the crime, not about black magic, but about the healing of souls. You told me yourself that shamans in the old days taught the sons of kings from the south. So there is nothing new about this being shared with others."

"I shouldn't have told so many stories."

"But shamanism explains it all, right?"

"Maybe..."

"This is a gift to everyone."

"What is it actually that you want to share with everyone?"

"How to heal ourselves and how to heal the environment. This is needed both here in our community and in the rest of the world. There is so much emptiness in people."

"But they can't see the wisdom."

"We must do what we can to give the wisdom back. This is the only way to avoid the world fire. Isn't that right? Isn't that in accordance with the rules?"

"I represent the past. You represent the future. Don't ask me."

"Who should I ask then?"

"Ask Jov."

The dog crawled out from underneath the table, began to bark and scratch at the front door.

"What is it now?" asked Abraha and moved over to the window.

Three people were walking up the road.

"Do you know them?" asked Abraha as they stood by the window watching the three.

"I think it is Liisa and Heaika," said Jon.

"I guess it is. But who's walking in the middle?"

"He looks familiar. But I can't tell who he is."

"They brought a stranger," said Abraha.

They sat back down. The dog was lying with its nose pressed into the crack of the door.

"We used to call Swedish-Henry the old wolf. He used to sniff around the meatpots like a wolf sniffing around a reindeer herd," Abraha told him.

"Did you know Jon, the one who was killed?"

"I knew who he was. I never believed the story about the car accident. Especially after I learned that Henry had moved here to the coast and that he was being haunted by ghosts. By the way, Henry lost his hand in that same accident."

"But it wasn't he who did it."

"Who was it then?"

"It was she. She did it in order to get the drum. I had the first dream about the Sun-drum the day Jon was killed and they took the drum."

"Are you talking about the wisdom that is coming back? Down from a place beyond the stars and up from a place beneath the moss?" asked Heaika.

"Yes, but there is more," replied Abraha.

"What more does the prophecy say?" asked Lajla.

"You'd better ask that guy over there." Abraha pointed toward Jon.

"I'll tell you more about it later," said Jon. Because what did it actually mean, the metaphor of the bull losing his horns? Did he lose his power? Did he die? Ruth had not explained this further. He was on shaky ground. And what had happened to Henry and Askovit? Because of his own confusion, he responded the way he did. Besides, he was tired of talking. He needed peace and quiet now. All the chatting seemed so absurd and his heart was crying.

"Can you fill in the missing pieces?" Liisa asked Heaika.

"There was something more," was all Heaika said.

But how could he possibly know? Heaika probably answered the way he did because he did not want her to know that he was not familiar with the whole prophecy.

They walked out of the house, were ready to leave.

Heaika peeked into Jon's van, saw the lasso lying in the front seat.

"You must get serious about practicing or you will never be able to make more than five hits out of ten," he said.

"Yes, I promise. Next time you will have better competition," answered Jon.

It was Jon who had told Heaika about the prophecy. And Jon knew more about it than he did. But Heaika had reminded Jon that he was the best lasso-thrower. The score was now evened out between them again.

"The lasso saved my life, just by me wearing it," added Jon.

Jon was letting his hand slide through her short hair, feeling the shape of her head and the seams of her cranium underneath the hair and the skin.

"Did you know that the cranium is not yet fused in newborn babies?" she asked.

"No."

"This is so the head can be pushed together to help the baby come out easier during birth."

"Gee."

"There are spots on top called fontanelles. These don't grow together till after birth. I once felt the head of a newborn baby and there was only skin and no bones between my fingers and the baby's brain."

Jon felt her anterior fontanelle, the small indentation at the top of the head. He shivered. The feeling he had in his fingertip was an acute reminder about the vulnerability of the body. She seemed so defenselessly naked without hair. The thought of the father he had never had and of what had happened to him kept spinning around in his head. He was warm with tears he was not able to shed.

Abraha's long white hair was blowing in the wind. The wind was surprisingly mild for a September evening close to sunset. Out on the fjord, white-capped waves were rising and sinking.

"Do you believe people come up from the ocean like some claim?" asked Jon.

"If that was true, why don't we see more people rising from the ocean?" said Abraha with a smile. "I'm a star wanderer from the heavens, and soon I will wander back to the stars."

"What's really the purpose of all our struggles and toil anyway?" asked Jon, deliberately choosing the word *purpose*. The purpose?..." Abraha hesitated.

"Of everything we struggle and strive for the short time we stand on our feet."

"You can't answer a question like that," said Liisa.

"What do you think the purpose of it is?" Abraha asked her.

"Does it have any purpose at all? Everything seems out of control the way our world looks today. I mean..." What Liisa meant was left hanging in the air.

"The purpose is to fight for our rights," said Heaika.

"The purpose is to save nature and each other," replied Lajla.

"And what do you think, Jon?" asked Abraha.

"To heal souls so we can live without fear and be happy."

They had all answered and were now looking inquiringly at the old man with the blowing snow-white hair.

"The purpose is to hand the wisdom down," answered Abraha.

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THEY DROVE BY the shiny blue truck and were chased by the barking dogs all the way out to the highway.

"I had black hair because my father wanted a black-haired son," Lajla told him.

"So you cut it."

"I have been cutting some cords from the past. The spider urged me to do so."

"What did Tomas say?"

"Tomas will never change. But what's most important is that the helping spirits have given me new inner strength."

Jon nodded. The landscape kept coming at him and then disappearing behind him. It pushed his tears back.

"The night before last, I dreamed that you needed me," she said.

"Is that right?"

"Did you need me?"

"I saw you in a vision. I hardly recognized you with your new haircut."

"Answer. Did you need me?" she repeated.

"I didn't recognize you until you were only a couple of meters away. First, I thought it was a man who came walking. But I like your new hairstyle."

"Do you like it, really?" she asked.

"I like it. And I needed you just when you showed up."

Jon bought some fruit and a box of raisins.

"Did you see Abraha's car?" Lajla asked as they drove on.

"Yes, it was he we bumped into that night. He and I have talked about it."

"So it was he."



"Think about all the times you were talking about reporting the poaching. But every time it would slip away. It's odd, isn't it?" asked Jon.

They passed the police station, turned left at the intersection.

"Do you really like it?" Lajla was looking at herself in the mirror.

"It's beautiful. Let me feel it."

"You already felt it."

"One more time," he begged.

She moved closer to him, gave him her head.

"What is all this talk about the prophecy?" she asked after a while.

"There was a large white reindeer on the tundra. It had a calf. A wolf wanted to take the calf but the reindeer defended it. It fought with the wolf to distract it so the calf could get away. The calf wanted to hide by the coast. But the wolf tracked it down. When it was about to attack the calf, a bear came and rescued it."

"That's what happened to you, wasn't it?" asked Lajla and sat up.

"The bear carried the calf back up on the tundra. When he set the calf down, it had turned into a drum, so the prophecy goes."

"What happened to the white reindeer?"

"It lost its horns."

"And what happened to the wolf?"

"It died."

"What does Abraha say about the prophecy?"

"He told me his job was to hand down the knowledge about the openings and that he knew nothing about drums. But one day, he would hold a drum in his hand. On that day, his job would be carried out."

"Where does the prophecy come from?"

"From the Grandfather Stone."

Then Lajla told her story.

"I felt uneasy after my dream. First, I thought it was because you were in danger and needed me. So I brought out the bluebell-shaped stone."

"Yes?"

"Needles came sailing through the air."

"Were you hit?"

"The stone would stop them. Then a huge black bird came flying and split the stone with its beak."

"That was Askovit's bird," said Jon.

"The bird tried to devour me. Can you guess who helped me?"

"The spider."

"No, the cat. It jumped out of my belly, was much larger than the bird, scared it off, back to her."

"The bird got her in the end," confirmed Jon.

"It was she who cast sleep on me the night we came driving."

"She also tried to crush my head and she almost succeeded."

"And I thought she was friendly."

"She was the one who killed Jon. It happened the night I had my first dream about the drum. She smashed his head with a stone," Jon told her.

"Is she still alive?"

"She's alive."

"She is the dangerous one, not he." Lajla shuddered.

"The man she killed was a relative of mine."

"A close one?"

"My father."

He went through emotions he did not even know he had. The feeling of loss was crying out inside him, out of all the years. Now this loss had been given a name. And he had not even known the man. That was the saddest part.

A Leonard Cohen tape was playing in the van when he started up the motor and drove off through the autumn landscape toward the mountain pass.

"I want to see your neck," said Lajla suddenly, and brushed his hair to the side. "I go crazy over it." She proceeded to bury her face in his neck, kissing him, then bit his skin.

"When we get up into the mountains, let's find a place with a view," she suggested.

He did not feel like making love, turned away when Lajla unbuttoned his shirt. But she got the buttons open and rubbed him on the stomach with the palm of her hand, around and around his navel.

When she stopped, he missed the heat from her hands. He knew, although reluctantly, that he was about to give in.

"What happened to the hands?"

"Oh, so disappointed," she answered while she pretended to occupy herself with something else.

"What's keeping you?" he said impatiently.

"Oh, he is getting hot now," she teased.

Then she placed something cool on his navel. What was it?

"Suddenly, I have a craving for raisins." She kissed them off his navel and into her mouth.

Then she placed a line of raisins from his forehead all the way down to the dips in the body where the thighs met the hipbone. Every time her tongue touched him, a quiver went through his body. She was eating raisins with great delight, was sniffing and blowing on his skin. It tickled. After a while, the ticklish feeling merged with another sensation rising from the depths of his body.

He was beginning to get warm.

Her tongue and her lips kissed and tickled, her teeth nibbled. After awhile, this combination of soft skin and teeth felt more than good. It became heavenly. He could not lie still.

"Don't move," she commanded.

"I can't help it."

"I'll stop, then."

"Please don't stop."

"Well, then, be still."

He undressed her, put a sun-raisin in her navel. Then he leaned across her body and quickly licked it up, like a bear in a cloudberry swamp.

She jumped.

"Lie still," he said.

"Okay."

"With closed eyes."

He placed raisins on her breasts, caught them with his lips, careful not to touch the hardened nipples.

"And the nipples?" she asked.

"They can wait."

Then he placed raisins in the hollows by her collarbone and on her throat, stuck his face, like a growling bear, into the base of her throat. Lajla jumped up. Raisins were flying everywhere.

"Lie still," he commanded.

"It feels too weird. I can't."

He placed raisins along the crest of her hips and around the triangle. When he leaned forward, he could hear his own heart pounding.

Lajla extended her arms, waving her quivering, outstretched hands, like ptarmigan wings, toward him.

"Come, quickly. You must," she said, grabbing him and pulling him down on the mattress to her.

A good while later, they sat back up. The windows were steaming on the inside, but it was cool in the van. They put their shirts back on and slid into the sleeping bags.

She placed her head against his chest and he stroked her.

"Your heart is beating peacefully," she stated.

"Yes."

"You have me, you know."

"I know."

"You didn't even know the man," said Lajla.

"He was never there. And he'll never be there either. But at least I know."

He held Lajla's head against his heart.

"I didn't realize till now how deeply I missed him."

He had been sleeping but had awakened again. In the sky above the mountains hung the new crescent moon. He was feeling much better. She was right. He had her. She was sleeping on her side on the mattress. The quilted bag had slid to the side, exposing her bare hip.

A large new room of knowledge and emotions had opened up in him. He needed to keep exploring it to find out all that it contained. Something was living there in the emptiness, in the loss, in the big black hole. It was, after all, better to know the truth than to live with the unknown. Actually, he had been lucky. He had made it. And he had learned much. He was surrounded by so much newborn wisdom, so much new life and so many new seeds and bear spirits.

Lajla turned around in her sleep. The quilt slid all the way off. Her bare behind aroused him. He needed this feeling now. It was something tangible, their own energy exchange, a small circle. He wished they could be completely and fully together. As whole human beings, if only for a moment, one single time. It could perhaps happen sometime in the future. But first, he had to become whole himself. It would take time, a long time after what had happened. He needed to collect all the pieces. And who knows what the future might have in store?

Could that which had been wounded and destroyed ever be healed?

At that moment, the bear trotted forward on soft paws. Suddenly, she attacked him, dismembered him and was gone. Slowly, he came back into his body. Piece by piece, he was put back together into a new body, a new consciousness. He felt like he was being reborn, but he felt more whole than ever. He understood that

nothing was destroyed. Everything was connected. It had just been invisible to him before. Now, the causes became clear, just like the dreams that had been the cause of this journey. It was as if he had experienced it all before and only needed to rediscover it. Still, there was so much more to learn.

Lajla shuddered when he told about the bear and the dismemberment.

"Are all these spirit adventures making you mad?"

"This is nothing that should be trifled with. Abraha told me that shamans sometimes go mad when the spirits come and drag them in between the worlds."

"What do you mean by mad?" she asked.

"They can't stand being around anyone, neither wife, children nor friends, and have to wander alone in the wilderness, far from people."

"Why? Because they need peace?"

"No, because they become unpredictable and wild and are too difficult to be around. They can't function among people. Abraha was institutionalized, and I almost threw a stone at a poor driver yesterday when I came off the mountain. I grabbed a stone, raised my arm and almost threw it at his head."

"What did you have against him?"

"I had never seen him before. He just happened to be driving by. I was still between the worlds. Then you are off-balance. Just seeing a face was enough."

"You could have killed him." She gave him a frightened look.

"Fortunately, I was warned by a small naked man who lived in a tree," he replied.

He could tell that Lajla was worried.

"I think you have carried it way too far with these spirit powers," she said carefully.

"Dear, this is just the beginning."

"Isn't it over now?"

"No, it has barely just begun."

"No, say it's over. Now that we are together again," she begged.

"The next step is to find the right piece of wood so I can make myself a real divination drum. Then I will learn the art of shamanism. I can already feel the spirits calling me, pulling me in between the worlds. Banzo is among them."

Lajla looked at him carefully. Then she asked quietly, "Banzo?"

"The reindeer god. He is lashing at me with his antlers this very moment."

The look in Lajla's face changed from worry to disbelief to wonder and then doubt.

The truth finally dawned on her.

"You frighten me," she said, pulled his head close to her and bit him hard in the neck. Then she sniffed around his neck and hair for a long time.

"There is a new smell here. It smells like reindeer."

"The spirit has already moved in," answered Jon.

Then she suddenly grabbed him, hard, by the hair, with both hands.

"You continue to frighten me. I can't let you do that, my dear," said Lajla.

She kept holding him firmly by the hair, would not let go. Then she shook him, the way only she could, to express her innermost feelings.

Kautokeino, August 1987 - August 1988

## GLOSSARY

*gamme* - Sami (Lapp) sod-hut

*Gannflies* - flies sent by someone involved with Black Magic to bring misfortune to a person

*joik* - very old spiritually-oriented Sami song

*lavvo* - a Sami tipi-like dwelling

*Mosegubbe* - "the old man of the moss," the bear

*sieidi* - a sacrificial stone marking a power place

*stallo* - originally representing various kinds of devilish, mythical giants



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Fiction/Shamanism

Ailo Gaup, born in 1944, is one of the most prominent Sami authors in Scandinavia today. He made his debut as a poet and has had three collections of poetry published. In 1986 he was awarded a Nordic Poetry Prize.



*IN SEARCH OF THE DRUM* is his first novel.

*About the book:*

Jon has had a series of vivid dreams about a Sami shamanic drum which he is told is in danger. He wants to save it and bring back the knowledge of how it was used. Together with his wife, Lajla, he embarks on a journey to northern Norway, a journey to his cultural legacy. He quickly becomes involved in dramatic events that take him on a voyage into himself. It becomes an initiation that unlocks the doors to the ancient wisdom of his ancestors—a wisdom that has long been banished and suppressed by western civilization.

*In the author's words:*

"For me it is a challenge to integrate *dream* and *reality*. One does not know where one ends and the other begins. The storytelling techniques used in myth have helped me do this, involving letting outer world actions be manifestations of inner world experiences."

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